IMPOSSIBLE INDIANS:
RACE, PERFORMANCE AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF CONQUEST

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IMPOSSIBLE INDIANS:
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Impossible Indians is a study of 20th-century U.S. Latina/o and Latin American theatre and performance artists whose works of art are inspired by the 15thand 16th-century Conquest of the Americas. The "decolonial turn" in Latin American and U.S. Latina/o Studies urges scholars to theorize post/colonialism from the birth of modernity/coloniality in the Americas during the early colonial period. Few studies, however, have theorized the place of performance in the consolidation of modernity/coloniality. While the formal colonization of non-indigenous people in the Americas has a beginning (the Conquest) and a presumed end (colonial independence), colonialism is also a process that haunts their postcolonial imaginary in what José Rabasa has called "a ghost-like continuity" that staged and restaged for centuries. My dissertation theorizes this tragic framework by studying the ways in which dramatic artists consistently turn to indigenous colonial and pre-Columbian pasts as a manner of imagining their own racial present bound to the history of colonialism in the New World.

I argue that playwrights like Rodolfo Usigli, Cherríe Moraga, Sergio Magaña, William Shakespeare, Aimé Césaire, and Migdalia Cruz, and performance artists like Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Antonin

Artaud, and Nao Bustamante, stage a vision of the their modern world that questions the linear temporality attributed to historical formations of race. In creating their racial presents vis-à-vis ideologies of indigeneity that are always-already originating outside of modern time, the subjects of my dissertation stage colonialism as an unfinished process by strategically returning to scenarios of conquest. My argument is two fold: I trace the employment of performative and archival knowledge as ethnographic tools to invent the indigenous racial subject of the Americas from a colonial and colonizing standpoint; and I analyze theatre and performance art that have crated decolonial ideals of indigeneity and indigenous people in order to reproduce and discard racial ideologies transferred from the colony to the postcolonial. I insist that this mode of cultural production creates a cultural politics of conquest that poses a radical challenge to linear conceptions of both race and time.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Armando García is the first member of his extended family to graduate from high school. In 2006, he received a B.A. in Ethnic Studies and Comparative Literature with Honors from Brown University, where he was a Bill and Melinda Gates Millennium Scholar and a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow. In 2006, he was awarded a Ford Foundation Pre-Doctoral Diversity Fellowship to pursue doctoral studies in the Department of Romance Studies at Cornell University. He spent the Fall 2008 semester as an Ivy Plus Exchange Scholar at Yale University's American Studies Program. Beginning in August 2012, Armando García is Assistant Professor of Hispanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Pittsburgh.

A mi Pa Carmen,

por llevarme a los concursos de primaria, y por no querer que mis manos dejaran de poder escribir.

A mi Papa y mi Mama,

por nunca dejar de apoyarme en mi carrera, sin importar los sacrificios.

To the villages that raised me,

I once wrote to tell you que su lengua se había convertido en la mía, pero mi lengua educada aún no se convertía en la suya.

Hoy escribo para decirles que mi lengua educada no es sólo mía, también es de Ustedes.

To Love,

decolonial, always.

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Impossible Indians would have been (ironically) impossible to complete were it not for the members of my dissertation committee. Debra A. Castillo, Mary Pat Brady, José Edmundo Paz-Soldán, and Gerard Aching allowed me into their busy lives and schedules so that we could geek-out over race, indigeneity, coloniality, Latinidad, theatre, and performance. Debbie has been my most avid supporter since I stepped into her office my first year of graduate school, and she guided me through the riddles of U.S. Latina/o and Latin American theatre and performance in ways I could not have done on my own. I am forever grateful for her support of students and our intellectual caliber, and I am indebted to her for the personal time and energy that she invested into making *Impossible Indians* a reality. Many years ago, Mary Pat answered an email from an undergraduate student from Brown University who was a bit too eager to talk to her about Cherríe Moraga's Xicana Dyke Nationalist theatre. I thank her for having had that conversation with me then, and for pushing my thinking in innovative, challenging and provocative ways during the six years that followed. My ways of thinking about Latinidad and coloniality would not have been the same if Mary Pat had not been here to question my arguments, and I

consider myself a better thinker and scholar because of her. Edmundo also received a letter-length email from me in 2005, when I decided that it was a good idea to explain in detail my reasons for wanting to go to Cornell. Luckily for me, he took the time to write me back with an encouraging response. I am thankful for his reminder that the theoretical questions I raise are speaking to the violence that accompanies knowledge in terrains framed by conquest, and that mine are questions that need to be asked. I also owe him my gratitude for fostering my newly discovered love for translating fiction, and, most importantly, for the care he has shown me since that email from so many years ago. Gerard first inspired me to continue my work theorizing race and colonialism when he gave his job talk at Cornell several years ago. He arrived at Cornell shortly before my A Exams were taking place and well after I had finished my coursework, but he nonetheless welcomed me into his office to discuss my work. To him I owe much of the terminology I employ throughout *Impossible Indians*, since it was in those conversations that it became evident to me that what I was trying to wrap my thinking around were ideologies of indigeneity and native subjectivity. I am also indebted to him for reminding me to be patient with myself as I negotiate the large body of dense material with which I work, and to be more critically attentive to the intellectual and political work being done by the artists that I study. If anything from my dissertation sounds like Debbie, Mary Pat, Edmundo, or Gerard, it's probably because I heard it from them first.

Sasha-Mae Eccleston, words cannot describe how much our friendship has meant to me since we first met in Em-Wol a decade ago. I look forward to many decades more.

Melissa Figueroa has been a best friend and sister to me since the first day we shared hateration for a common force. In true "bolicua"-fashion, we will one day find ourselves walking through NYC in high-heeled shoes and diva clothes to match.

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Helena Maria Viramontes is a force to be reckoned with. *Their Dogs Came With Them*, in my humble opinion, is one of the best works of 20th-century literature, and in its pages Helena shows herself to be a true master of her craft. I only hope that I can continue to be guided by a small piece of

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Troy Richardson helped me think through decolonial arguments and pushed my thinking about theatre and performance in ways that only a committee member could. I consider him my unofficial fifth member of my dissertation committee because I learned much from him and his knowledge about philosophy and theories of indigeneity.

Juan Antonio Hernández's course on race in 19th-century Cuba and his class on film and literature of the Cuban Revolution were two of the best courses that I had the pleasure of taking as a graduate student Cornell. These courses were the miracles that saved my first year of graduate school, and I am indebted to Juan Antonio for fostering my intellectual curiosity in his response to my ideas.

Unknowingly, Santiago Morales-Rivera's class on guilt in 20th-century Spanish fiction set the ground for some of the ideas on tragedy drawn out in *Impossible Indians*. As with Juan Antonio, Santiago took special interest in my work written for his class and then encouraged me to follow up with an independent studies with him. Our independent studies on violence and Spanish theatre also paved the way for my study of Latin American and U.S. Latina/o theatre and performance, and I thank him for helping me put together the pieces of my puzzle.

María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, Patricia Ybarra and Alicia Schmidt-Camacho are three of the most influential scholars in whose classrooms I've been fortunate enough to sit. Josie inspired me to become a professor when I first stepped into her "Chicano Popular Culture" course in 2003, and she has guided me along the way towards earning my Ph.D. If anyone is to be held responsible for how I've managed to make it this far, that would be

Josie. Patty taught me to love theatre and performance in her classes on Theatres of Conquest and Latina/o Drama, two of the courses that helped me frame what my scholarship would like since very early on in my career. It was Patty who first encouraged me to study the work of Cherríe Moraga in ways that her essays and plays had not been studied before; if it weren't for her guidance of my undergraduate thesis, my dissertation would not exist. Alicia's course on Cultures of the Americas gave me a breath of intellectual fresh air in a time when I felt I needed it most. Her writings, her teachings and her discussions of cultural production allowed me to think in frameworks that I had not been able to explore at Cornell, and she was among the first to help me piece together the dissertation prospects that eventually turned into *Impossible Indians*. These three scholars have taught me the meaning of interdisciplinary scholarship of the highest caliber, and I hope to follow in their footsteps.

My graduate studies were supported in part through a Pre-Doctoral Diversity Fellowship from the Ford Foundation, travel grants from Cornell University' Graduate School, research grants from Cornell's Latino Studies Program and the Society for the Humanities, and research grants from the Graduate Initiatives Program of the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation. As with the intellectual and personal support that I have received over the years, I've also been fortunate enough to receive funding from these institutions to pursue my scholarship.

Four generations of my family have stood behind my education and have been relentless in their support of my intellectual goals. My family sat at the beginning of my educational and intellectual journey where it all began

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCING THE IMPOSSIBLE INDIANS: RACE, TIME, AND PERFORMANCE, OTHERWISE

I will tell you how hungry my body is to know something beyond the colony.
— Cherríe Moraga, *An Irrevocable Promise: Staging the Story Xicana*

In Spain there were many complaints that our skin was not dark enough for us to be "real" primitives.
— Coco Fusco, *English is Broken Here*

Pero hay, en la historia de México, algo que no previó ningún tragediante griego… Y ese algo es la destrucción de un grupo de dioses, de una teogonía y de una mitología, por otro dios. La lucha de Cuauhtémoc contra el español y contra Cristo es inferior a la lucha de Cuauhtémoc contra el indio mexicano, contra las profecías y contra sus propios dioses. Cuando los dioses mexicas caen y el templo mayor cede el solar a la catedral… cuando el mexicano es cargador de piedras y extractor de minerales, Cuauhtémoc se defiende y lucha aún…. Muere, tal como surge la Virgen de Guadalupe, por un mundo que vendrá a ser por encima de todo lo que es. Su muerte toma la forma volitiva testimoniada por el héroe trágico griego.[1]
— Rodolfo Usigli, *Primer ensayo hacia una tragedia mexicana*

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[1] Rodolfo Usigli, "Primer ensayo hacia una tragedia mexicana (1950)" in Rodolfo Usigli, *Teatro completo*, Vol. 5, Ed. Luis de Tavira and Alejandro Usigli. Mexico City: Fondo de cultura económica, 2005.
* *My translation*: "But in the history of Mexico there is something that no Greek tragedian foretold… And that something is the destruction of a group of gods, of a theogony and a mythology, by another god. Cuauhtémoc's battle against the Spaniard and against Christ is inferior to Cuauhtémoc's battle against the Mexican Indian, against the prophecies and against his own gods. When the Mexica gods fall and the Templo Mayor cedes its space over to the cathedral… when the Mexican becomes a beast of burden carrying rocks and extracting minerals, Cuauhtémoc still resists and defends himself … He dies, just like the Virgen de Guadalupe surfaces, for a world that will come to exist over everything that is. His death takes the volatile form experienced by the Greek tragic hero." (277).

ARIEL: So then what's left? War? And you know that when it comes to that, Prospero's invincible.

CALIBAN: Better death than humiliation and injustice. Anyhow, I'm going to have the last word. Unless nothingness has it. The day when I begin to feel that everything's lost, just let me get hold of a few barrels of your infernal power and as you fly around up there in your blue skies you'll see this island, my inheritance, my work, all blown to smithereens… and, I trust, Prospero and me with it. I hope you'll like the fireworks display –it'll be signed Caliban.

— Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*

Sadly, over 40 percent of our audience, no matter where we were, believed that the exhibit was real, and did not feel compelled to do anything about it.
— Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *The New World Border*

In *Fur*, each character lusts for the character most likely not to give them what they want or need… Each character in the play is at first repulsed by the one who loves them most, but in the end learns something about the true nature of love.
— Migdalia Cruz, *Fur*

Think about [this burrito] as the representation of the modern indigenous peoples… I'd like to think of my performance not as audience participation so much as audience salvation. I like anyone here who spittles the guilt of the last 500years to please report to the stage now. I'd like to ask any white men who would like to take the burden of the last 500yrs of guilt to report to the stage now… Anyone who is offended by this I really encourage you to just leave your body … I just want to encourage you to feel the healing rush that is going to surge through your body as you take the guilt for all those people who were too much of a coward to come up on stage for you. Cause everyone is channeling all their shit right into your body right now, you know that, right? It's ok, relax. And then what I'd like you all to do in order to participate, because we all know for everyone to participate in order for a ritual to actually work, is when his teeth actually bite down on the burrito, I'd like each of you to say "A Man," not "Amen," but "A Man," and think of somebody who you believe needs to be absolved for 500 years of guilt and repression so we can just move on… I'd like to thank all of you for taking the brunt of the guilt.
— Nao Bustamante, *Indig/urrito*

In the spirit of Sylvia Wynter, I begin by providing the reader of my work this set of epigraphs as a guideline with which to follow the arguments I articulate in *Impossible Indians: Race, Performance and the Cultural Politics of Conquest*.[2] Taken together, the order in which I place these words by Cherríe Moraga, Coco Fusco, Rodolfo Usigli, Aimé Césaire, Migdalia Cruz, and Nao Bustamante narrates a terrifying story that these artists have lived. Their story is the story of damnation inherited to them since 1492, the year that the world's order was made anew with the arrival of Christopher Columbus on lands and peoples he did not know existed. *Impossible Indians* begins and ends with these artists' theatre and performance art generated from their damnation, a common life of tragedy that each artist negotiates by turning to the indigenous subject originally invented in the colony in 1492. I believe that their theatre and performance art deriving from conquest are a philosophy of the colonial difference because these live at the crux where race, performance and coloniality/modernity constitute the invention of the Americas in the 20th-century.

[2] For Wynter, the epigraphs she places "at the beginning of select sections [of her essays] are intended to serve as guide-quotes… to orient the reader as the Argument [of these essays] struggles to think/articulate itself outside the terms of the disciplinary discourses of our present epistemological order" (2003, footnote 1). As with "Introducing the Impossible Indians," the four chapters that follow my introductory chapter also begin with a set of epigraphs. I have chosen to include in this introductory chapter an epigraph by each of the artists I study in chapters 1 through 4, and this duplication is meant to orient my reader towards tracing a cultural politics of conquest expressed by these artists through their works of art.

Theatre, Performance and the Time of Race Beyond the Colony

Together, the epigraphs are telling of this invention's repercussions felt in everyday life in the Americas. Cherríe Moraga's embodied desire for knowledge beyond the conscriptions of the colony leads her to theorize the ideal subject of her theatre of liberation as an Indian dead in the pre-Columbian past. The anticolonial performance of Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña also desired a mode of relationality in 1992 that did not reproduce the anti-relational mode of Columbus' genocidal discovery. As part of the performance, they tactically dressed themselves in Indian garbs, trapped and exhibited themselves inside a golden cage, and silently waited for their audiences to recognize that the Indian in the cage represented 500 years of colonialism and needed to be set free from damnation. "Sadly," their audiences knew the Indians in the cage were not existing in the modern world as equally modern as themselves, and their anticolonial intent did not succeed in the setting the Indian free. Rodolfo Usigli's 1950 essay on 20th-century Mexican tragedy looks back to the Conquest of the Aztecs to recuperate Cuauhtémoc, the last fallen emperor of the Aztecs, as a tragic hero of modernity in the Americas. The Indians of his Mexican theatre live in a time that is centuries removed from his own.

Also in a tragic mode of theatre, Aimé Césaire (2000) adapts William Shakespeare's 17th-century play, *The Tempest* (2004), for the stage of his Black theatre and recreates Caliban as the authorized native subject of his anti-colonial revolution. Migdalia Cruz (2000) then rewrites Caliban for the stage of Latina theatre and fulfills the native's original promises of war, death and destruction at the hands of Citrona, her Latina lesbian protagonist. Citrona's fulfillment of Caliban's promises, however, cannot give these natives what they desire most: freedom from damnation never comes to bring salvation for the oppressed. As Cruz's words suggest, the true nature love generated under the auspices of colonialism, even when beyond the conscriptions of the colony, does not mean the end of damnation for native subjects. The decolonial gift of salvation for the damned comes to them dressed as a burrito strapped onto Nao Bustamante's crotch. The Latina gift of decoloniality is a gift that breaks native subjects free from the tragic time of colonial/modernity, and it is a relationality of race framed by love, not life in hell.

Impossible Indians is divided in two parts, each one containing two chapters. Part I, "The Indian in the Archive," focuses on essays and plays by two Mexican playwrights, Rodolfo Usigli and Sergio Magaña, and a Xicana playwright, Cherríe Moraga. These artists' desire to know indigeneity *beyond*

the colony, I argue, leads them to find an Indian buried in the archives of colonial history of the Americas *without* coloniality/modernity, and to exclude the Indian living *beside* and *within* modernity/coloniality in the present. Part II, "The Indian in Other Times," centers primarily on the relationship between the archive of colonial history and theatre and performance art deriving from but not reproducing the archive's limitations. This second part focuses on Coco Fusco's and Guillermo Gómez-Peña's performance art in light of Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty; Aimé Césaire's and Migdalia Cruz's adaptations of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; and Nao Bustamante's decolonial performance. I argue that these artists' engagements with embodiment and the archive develop from the ideological limitations of the previous chapters to find an Indian that dwells elsewhere from damnation.

In my first chapter, "Tragically Mexican: Rodolfo Usigli's Racial Performativity," I study Usigli's essay, "Primer ensayo hacia una tragedia mexicana" (1950), and his play, *Corona de luz* (1963), the last part to his trilogy of antihistorical plays on Mexican colonial history. The first section of this chapter analyzes Usigli's reflection on the state of 20th-century Mexican theatre, whose underdevelopment he believed was due largely in part to modern playwrights' inability to recognize the country's centuries-long tragic

tradition, one that overrides the Renaissance's claims to the Ancient Greeks and their tragedies. For Usigli, the fall of the Aztec empire at the hands of Cortés set the grounds for a tragic experience and a tragic hero that Greek tragedians nor their European inheritors could ever lay claim to. In the Aztec rituals observed by Fray Juan de Zumárraga and the indigenous peoples' resistance to spiritual conquest, he says, was a mode of being that partnered ontology with a dramatic form in a manner that was uniquely and tragically Mexican. I argue that the playwright's theory of tragedy built on Zumárraga's citations and Cuauhtémoc's imperial subjectivity, productive as it is in theorizing tragedy by way of race, refuses 20th-century indigenous peoples an access to tragic modernity and its performative ontology in the present. He relegates the lives of indigenous peoples in 1950 to the colony, which he sees as enunciated in his present, but since the Conquest no longer exists, the Indians' time of the colony is incongruent with his own present.

The second section of the chapter is a close reading of *Corona de luz*, where the playwright rehearses the debate between Fray Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, and stages the divine apparition of the Virgen de Guadalupe. Usigli first takes his play as an opportunity to to correct the idea of the human born from the Valladolid trial in 1550 in light of his ideas on Aztec performativity, and introduces Zumárraga's

observations as an answer to the question of the Indians' human condition. The play culminates in a scene where the indigenous ontology produced by Guadalupe-Tonantzin's apparition exceeds the logic of the colonial masters, and Usigli materializes a notion of indigenous ontology excluded by the trial in 1550. *Corona de luz*'s emphasis on the radical potential of performance to produce a being that challenges the colonial order, I argue, also provides us with a theory of the coloniality of being where race and ontology are constituted through both language and the performative. Furthermore, Usigli's racial performativity and tragic modernity question the separation of colonialism and coloniality as incommensurable with each other, and reveal that the colony not only haunts the artist's time, it frames very his present directly when he excludes the living Indians from the tragic stage of *Corona de luz*.

"Against Knowledge: Mayan Gods and the Colonial Residue of MeXicana Theatre," my second chapter, reads Moraga's and Magaña's plays and essays that are indirectly influenced by Usigli and his denying indigenous peoples a possible history of the present. Perhaps the least cohesive of my chapters, "Against Knowledge" theorizes Usigli's engagement with indigenous peoples and tragic temporality as one that is framed by a residue of colonialism. I then trace this colonial residue in two essays by Moraga

where she most clearly articulates what a theatre of liberation looks like for the indigenous peoples who have survived modernity's centuries-long genocidal project. For Moraga, the resistance to erasure can only be performed by the Indian whose DNA derives from her imperial Aztec scribes and the Mayan Daykeepers of the "myth" of the Popol Vuh, but not the mestizos and indigenous peoples who do not invoke the Indian when she desires to know beyond the colony. I argue that Moraga's theatre is a decolonial project that denies liberation and freedom to those mestizos and indigenous peoples living in the colony but are unable to lay claims to her ideology of indigeneity based on genetics. Moraga's vision of liberation is antihistorical in that she refuses to see history as framed by a linear notion of time. Her brand of liberation also becomes anti-historical when she sees indigeneity as living in a time before and without colonialism, and excludes indigenous peoples whose lives dwell within and beyond the colony. Building from this critique, I then provide a close reading of her puppet theatre, *Heart of Earth: A Popol Vuh Story* (2001a), and Sergio Magaña's *Los Enemigos* (1990). I argue their plays' insistence on representing Mayan peoples as primitives —as is the case of Magaña's play rewriting the Mayan ceremony of the Rabinal Achi— or as a-historical myths of the pre-

Columbian period, effectively denies Mayans a coeval existence with the artists' own time.

In my third chapter, "Spectacular Indians: Antonin Artaud and the Cruelty of Latino Performance," I study a performance and a performance method that are foundational to the world of 20th-century modern art. Fusco's and Gómez-Peña's *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit* … has been most often celebrated as a performance that challenged the post-racial arguments of U.S. multiculturalism in the early 1990s. Building on these celebratory notes, I focus on the performance's end results to highlight the ways in which the performers were not able to fulfill their anticolonial imperatives because these were articulated through the very colonialism they wanted to critique. In light of their unending captivity, I argue that Fusco and Gómez-Peña re-conscript within the tragedy of modernity the indigenous peoples that they set out to liberate from a life damned by the colony. I also provide a close reading of Artaud's essays on his Theatre of Cruelty in relation to the French dramaturge's experiences with colonialism. Artaud began to theorize cruelty as a medicine for the tragedy of modernity when he encountered the dancers from Bali forced to perform in the 1931 Colonial Exposition, and when he invented Mexico's indigenous peoples as primitively bound to a time before Cortés. While the Latino performers'

tragic flaw hinged on their inability to liberate the Indians from the trap of colonialism/modernity, Artaud's cruelty set up the trap of modernity itself where the colonized were not to exist beyond the colony in the present. The spectacular Indians in both scenarios of conquest ended in damnation.

Of the chapters that make up *Impossible Indians*, "Rehearsals of the Damned: Damnation, Freedom, Salvation" covers the most historical, temporal, geographic and ideological ground. The previous three chapters set up the groundwork for theorizing the damnation of indigenous peoples through an unsurpassable mode of tragedy. In this fourth chapter, I argue for a mode of tragedy that can indeed bring a different future for the damned, precisely by rehearsing the scenes of subjection that took place in the terrain of the colony. The first part of chapter analyzes the Spanish 16th-century Requerimiento as a historical event where we can begin to theorize the damnation of colonial subjects in the name of Christian salvation. Following the work of José Rabasa and Sylvia Wynter, I trace this conjugation of native subjects in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (2004) and its 20th-century adaptation by Césaire, *A Tempest* (2000). I argue that while the Renaissance playwright cannot fathom a Caliban capable of rationalizing a desire for freedom, the Martiniquan anticolonial playwright imagines the slave as capable of reasoning his desire to be free but still unable to perform

said desire. In the second part of the chapter, I read Cruz's *Fur* (2000) as a Latina play whose protagonist rehearses Caliban's damnation. Unlike Caliban, Citrona fulfills her desire for freedom: she cannibalizes her masters binding her to racial slavery, but with her life of freedom in place and beyond the colony, she nonetheless ends her days in an isolated darkness. I argue that the beast's living free without love reproduces the anti-relational modes of colonialism, leaving salvation from damnation still unattainable even when freedom abounds. The third part of the chapter then focuses on *Indig/urrito*, Bustamante's performance commemorating the Quincentenary where she asked white men to come up to the stage, bite a burrito she strapped-on to her crotch, and absolve themselves from 500 years of racial guilt. Following Rabasa's theorization of the Requerimiento and José Esteban Muñoz' work on affect and racial performativity, I argue that Bustamante's insistence on reworking the relational field of race between her and her white audiences members has but one purpose in mind: salvation for the damned. *Indig/urrito*'s political imperative to move on beyond the colony hinges on its equally important ethical imperative to make it possible for the racialized self to recognize herself and the other in alterity. The brownness of love is the decolonial gift of salvation and freedom for the damned who wish to dwell in an altogether different time beyond the colony.

What does life for racialized subjects look like beyond the colony? These artists answer this question by offering us two answers: damnation or love, both mediated through embodiment. Usigli, Magaña and Artaud assume that colonialism has ended and its effects haunt their present lives, but when they invent their respective understandings of the authenticity of indigenous peoples as dead in the past, they do not account for their own trafficking in colonial relations *as* one more of these lasting effects of colonialism. While Usigli's, Magaña's, and Artaud's racial temporality is a time of tragedy that is unconscious of its colonial repetitions, racial temporality in the work of Moraga, Fusco, and Gómez-Peña refuses to see colonialism as a finished process precisely because the effects of colonialism still frame the relational field of race.

The first mode of tragedy recognizes the past's colonialism as a ghost-like continuity haunting the present, but the second mode of tragedy engages colonial hauntology *as* the living present, not a dead one. Both temporal modes of tragedy, however, are unable to offer an ideology of indigeneity that can transcend indigenous peoples' damnation past and present —their future is still bound to a life in hell. In contrast, Césaire and Cruz rehearse the scenes of colonial subjection haunting the modern art of Usigli, Moraga, Magaña, Artaud, Fusco and Gómez-Peña, to transgress the mode of tragedy

espoused by *The Tempest*. Their rehearsals repeat the tragedy of modernity and challenge damnation by tackling its anti-relationality head-on, even as their attempts to stage freedom do not bring damnation to its own tragic end. Salvation comes to these artists in the shape of a burrito strapped onto a phallic Indian woman whose performance redefines the relational field of race along the lines of alterity. Bustamante, I argue, pushes her audiences and the theorists of race to displace self-love onto others so that we can see that the other in alterity is living within a relational field, one that includes ourselves as well. Indeed, love is the heart of her decolonial performance asking us to move beyond and besides modernity/coloniality.

For the damned, the difference between a relationality of damnation (anti-relational) and a relationality of love (relationality in alterity) lies in each artist's modes of engaging time, race and conquest to bring about their future. As a way of engaging time and conquest, each artist invents an idea of what indigenous peoples are and then creates art based on this ideology of race. Their inventions of indigeneity, however, reveal that the time of race is incongruent with their own reality. Each artist theorizes the future of race by reflecting on it or performing it in the present, but the ways in which they envision the time of race —by way of the Conquest and its legacies— end up producing a relational field of race as one still framed by colonial relations

of power. The incongruence between the desire for decoloniality — expressed in their (re)employment of the Conquest in the service of transgressing colonial relations— and the end results of their decolonial projects —binding indigeneity to a time without a possible history of the present and without a future beyond the colony—, is what I am theorizing as the *temporal incongruence of race*.

Maldonado-Torres and the Coloniality of Being …

In one of the most insightful essays to emerge from the recently formed Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Program,[3] Nelson Maldonado-Torres traces what he and others have called "the coloniality of being" through the work of several philosophers and theorists fundamental to 20th-century critical thinking. "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept" (2007) reads Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lévinas, Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, Anibal Quijano, and Frantz Fanon side-by-side to form a kind of genealogy on the question of being. In his genealogy, Maldonado-Torres offers an answer to ontology by situating in dialogue philosophies emerging from the experience of colonialism with philosophies of Western modernity. Drawing from

[3] For a set of key essays on this project, please see the special issue on "Globalization and the Decolonial Option" in the journal *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, Issue 2-3, 2007.

Heidegger's and Lévinas' challenge to a philosophical tradition founded on the Cartesian notion of self, and Dussel's introduction of the *ego conquiro* to their ideas on ontology, he concludes that Mignolo, Quijano and Fanon provide a blueprint for a more libratory project "transforming the modern/colonial world into a transmodern world: that is a world where war does not become the norm or the rule, but the exception" (Maldonado 263). Fanon's experience with colonialism and his thinking from within the trenches of 20th-century colonialism, in particular, become for Maldonado-Torres the place from which to theorize "the existentialia of the 'subject' of the coloniality of Being" (243). The philosopher's ontological model theorizes a mode of being for modernity/coloniality at the turn of the 20th-century, and he argues that it is a radical project centering on the decolonial as the lens through which modernity ought to be constructed in the present.

The line of decolonial thinking that the philosopher is employing through Quijano, Dussel, and Mignolo stems from an understanding of modernity/coloniality rooted in the 15th and 16th-century Americas. This history of colonialism, I would suggest, is a far different experience of colonialism than the one he especially privileges in Fanon. Damnation addresses the experience of slavery and the (un)making of Blackness as inhuman in the history of the modern/colonial world, but the making of the

world explicitly through the non-ethics of war began, as Quijano, Sylvia Wynter and Maldonado-Torres himself have stated, with the construction of "race" as social-biological hierarchy in the 16th-century argument between Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de las Casas.[4] The Conquest of the Américas and its invention of indigenous peoples as subhuman in the Sepúlveda-Las Casas trial drops out of Maldonado-Torres' logic to give way to Fanonian damnation as the modus operandi for the coloniality of being. The experience of indigeneity —from its initial 15th and 16th-century invention to the present—, I argue, escapes the philosopher's logic in his theorizing of the coloniality of Being from Heidegger to Fanon.

Maldonado-Torres states that "the concept of coloniality of being emerged in discussions of a diverse group of scholars doing work on coloniality and decolonization," but the idea itself is "owe[d]" to Walter Mignolo, who first began to write about it in the mid-1990s (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 241). This body of scholarship is founded on "the idea […] that colonial relations of power left profound [marks] not only in the areas of authority, sexuality, knowledge and the economy, but on the general understanding of being as well" (242). From here, the coloniality of power

[4] This trial over whether the Indians were actually humans with souls is restaged in Rodolfo Usigli's *Corona de luz* (1963), when a Bishop and a Soldier argue in front of King Charles V for the possession of the Indians of New Spain. For my discussion of *Corona de luz* and the coloniality of being established in the Valladolid trial, see chapter one, "Tragically Mexican: Rodolfo Usigli's Racial Performativity."

refers to forms of power establishing modernity from 1492 to the present, the coloniality of knowledge regards the impact of colonization on areas related to knowledge and its production, and "[the] coloniality of being would make primary reference to the lived experience of colonization and its impact on language" (242). Coloniality is a different historical experience than colonialism:

> Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism… Coloniality is not simply the aftermath or the residual form of any given form of colonial relation. Coloniality emerges in particular socio-historical setting, that of the discovery and conquest of the Americas (243).

Maldonado-Torres is here understanding colonialism as a particular relationship of power: the political and economic dependency of one nation on another one. If colonialism is constituted through the relationship between the empire and the colony, the effects produced from this relationship outlast the colony's dependence on the metropolis "well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations"; coloniality rests on the effects produced by this particular relationship. What results after the formal undoing of colonialism is not a relationship of power, but a set of "long-

standing patterns of power." Coloniality is not a post- or neo-colonial relationship marking neither the beginning of life in the post-colonial period, nor a relationship without a formal colonial administration. Neither is coloniality a kind of colonial "residue," a faint reminiscence of colonialism's past life, but rather an imprint on all aspects of life left by the Conquest's longevity.

Still, I think that his theorizing of colonialism is rooted outside of "the particular socio-historical setting… of the discovery and conquest of the Americas" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243). He defines colonialism as that relationship between two nations where one's political and economic systems are dependent on the second; this makes the former a colony of the latter's empire. The colony-empire relationship is founded at least on a formal recognition of the two entities involved as nations, one to be subservient or dependent on the other. However, if we take 1492 as the primary moment of discovery and conquest of the Americas, the concept of nation that he's employing is incongruent with those times. At the end of the 15th-century, Spain was primarily a monarchy consolidating Christian hegemony over the Jews and Muslims of Iberia, with the expulsion of the latter from power shortly before Columbus embarked on his first trip en route to India. The discovery and conquest of the Americas were not part of

a relationship of power between nations, but a mode of relationality that did not exist before 1492. After all, the idea of the coloniality of power sitting at the heart of decolonial arguments did not exist prior the America's invention, which was itself produced from the relationship between an already existing empire and an entity that was neither nation nor colony (yet). The idea of nation at play in Maldonado-Torres is one that belongs to or at least originates in a historical period removed from the relationship begun in 1492, and is a more recent modern invention than the invention of América begun with the Renaissance's modernity. Colonialism, as he understands it, is incongruent with the historical experiences he invokes because it is more in tune with the second mode of European expansion into Africa and Asia than it is to the first of colonialism.

Mignolo and others have followed the work of Anibal Quijano to theorize forms of power that emerged after the formal demise of Spain's colonial control over the Americas,[5] but their work has not adequately addressed the impact of these patterns of power on the question of

[5] Selecting a single point to mark the end of European control in the Americas is a dubious task indeed. For example, the War of 1898 could arguably be considered the "official" demise of Spain's empire, as it lost its last colonies in the Americas to the United States. However, the rise of independent nations in the Américas begins much earlier in the 19th-century with Haiti's expulsion of the French from Hispaniola in the Haitian Revolution, and México's war of independence in 1810.

ontology. Maldonado-Torres cites Mignolo's coining of the term "colonialidad del ser" or "the coloniality of being" in the following quote:

> "Science" (knowledge and wisdom) cannot be detached from language; languages are not just 'cultural' phenomena in which people find their 'identity'; they are also the location where knowledge is inscribed. And, since languages are not something human beings have but rather something of what human beings are, coloniality of power and of knowledge engendered the coloniality of being (*colonialidad del ser*).[6]

Mignolo understands the coloniality of Being primarily on epistemological grounds and he sees the coloniality of Being as engendered by the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge, but makes no reference to the lived experience of this subaltern ontology. He also emphasizes the centrality of knowledge in language when he states that, beyond an understanding of languages rooted in culture, languages themselves embed or inscribe knowledge. The claims to a study of language as epistemological relates to a larger argument that is not limited to the human sciences, but to humanity itself. For both Mignolo and Maldonado-Torres, language and knowledge

[6] Mignolo quoted in Maldonado-Torres 2007, page 242; emphasis in the original. This citation of Mignolo's coining of the actual term "coloniality of being" dates to a 2003 essay published in Portugal that I have not been able to get a hold of yet. Sylvia Wynter's critical essay, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," appeared in that same year but it is not engaged in Maldonado-Torres's essay. Maldonado-Torres cites Mignolo's coining of the term, but Wynter's is actually the first essay entirely devoted to the coloniality of being. The philosopher's inclusion of Wynter's ideas in "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom" would perhaps have added a more thorough analysis of the category of the human that takes gender and sexuality as important components to understanding the racial subjectivity of the coloniality of being.

are not something that humans have, but are part of the very essence "of what [human] beings are." The move here is from epistemology to ontology, from a possession of something tangible ("since languages are not something human beings *have*") to that material thing itself ("rather something of *what* human beings *are*," emphasis mine).

I argue that the decolonialists' ideological move from epistemology to ontology is a questionable framing of ontology and coloniality solely through linguistics. To reiterate Mignolo, if languages are part of something that human beings are, and knowledge is inscribed or rooted in language, then it logically follows that knowledge is also part of what human beings are. And if the coloniality of being is created by the collusion of the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge, then ontology is equally determined by power and epistemology, both understood by way of language. What Mignolo leaves out in this definition of the coloniality of being is the existentialia created by these two determinants: the lived experience of colonization that Maldonado-Torres argues makes up the coloniality of being. The emphasis on language and knowledge as the determinants of what human beings are, thus, leaves out a different mode of being that is not wholly determined by language. More specifically, I would argue that the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge constitute human

essence as created by these two axis, but these do not account for a way of being human through embodiment and action. Power and knowledge alone cannot account for ontology defined as that which human beings *do*. These two axis push towards a concept of the human solely through language-knowledge —as that thing that human being *is*— , but not towards a humanity defined by what the human being *does*. Maldonado-Torres seems to sideline Mignolo's linguistic emphasis when he says that "[the] emergence of the concept of 'coloniality of Being' responded to the need to thematize the question of the effects of coloniality in lived experience and not only in the mind" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 242). He privileges Mignolo's citation of the term, but does not address his limitation of lived experience to language. This theorization of the effects of coloniality on the lives of racialized subjects does not actually account for an ontology constituted through language and embodiment. Humanity is understood as an essence —an essence created and impacted by colonial relations of power and knowledge, but an essence nonetheless— and the body is left out, along with the actual lived experience of colonialism and its aftermath.

Maldonado-Torres says that Mignolo's first mentioning of the coloniality of being allowed him to piece together his own thinking on the challenges to European philosophy posed by Heidegger and Lévinas. More

specifically, he credits Mignolo's insights for propelling him to raise further questions regarding race and colonial experiences when he engaged Heidegger's and Lévinas' work on ontology. He begins his analysis of the human with Heidegger, not because "Heidegger's conception of ontology and the primacy he gives to the question of being necessarily provide the best basis for the understanding of coloniality or decolonization, but [because] his analysis of being-in-the-world serve as a starting point to understanding some key elements of existential thought, a tradition that has made important insights into the lived experience of colonized and racialized peoples" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 249). Maldonado-Torres begins to summarize Heidegger's philosophies by stating that the German philosopher believed that the use of Descartes's "*cogito ergo sum*" within the Western philosophical tradition privileged the epistemological part of Cartesian equation ("I think") and ignored the ontological ("I am"). Heidegger challenged this tradition by altogether getting rid of "Man" and similar terms used to reference human beings because of their relationship to divinity. He understood ontology as "the idea that Being is not a being, an entity or a thing, but the Being of beings, that is, something like the general horizon of understanding for all things" (249). "The concept that he uses to refer to human beings-qua-beings for whom their own being is in question is

Dasein," whose subjectivity is mainly determined by "a collective figure: the One or the They," and the *Dasein* can only "relate authentically to itself by projecting its ownmost possibilities —not those defined by the They [which] can only be achieved by resoluteness" (250). In turn, authenticity's "resoluteness can only emerge in an encounter with the possibility which is inescapably one's own, that is, death. In death one is fully irreplaceable: no one can die for one, or one for another. Death is the singular individualizing factor," and only by facing it can the *Dasein* achieve authentic subjectivity and "detach herself from the They to determine her ownmost possibilities, and to resolutely define her own project of ek-sistence" (250).

Maldonado-Torres critiques Heidegger for thinking of ontology mostly from "the point of view of the victor in war, [rather] than of the vanquished" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 250). The possibility of dying is what constitutes existence for Heidegger's *Dasein* because only in the face of death can she achieve authenticity at the individual level. The thinking self emerging from the Enlightenment is, as Maldonado-Torres suggests, the perspective of the victor in that it sets itself up as the absolute thinking self. According to Enrique Dussel, also paraphrased by Maldonado-Torres,

"Hernán Cortés[7] gave expression to an ideal of subjectivity that could be defined as the *ego conquiro*," an ideal of "the self as a conqueror, of its tasks and missions [which] preceded Descartes' certainty about the self as a thinking substance (*res cogitans*)" (245). The conquistador's ideal of subjectivity predates the *ego cogito* historically, and this leads Dussel and Maldonado-Torres to argue that the skepticism that characterized the conquistador's ego also preceded the skepticism of the thinking self. The conquistador's certainty that he and his nature were not to be questioned, while the ones he conquered were "naturally" to be questioned on their ability to think and be, set up "the ground for the articulation of the *ego cogito*" centuries later. Before the invention of the self as a thinking substance, the *ego conquiro* created "the barbarian [as] a racialized self … characterized [by] a radical questioning or permanent suspicion regarding the humanity of [its] self in question" (245). It is because of this systematic suspicion of the colonized's humanity that the Renaissance's *ego conquiro*

[7] It is interesting that Cortés is taken the exemplary conquistador and his actions the foundation of the *ego conquiro* when he was not the first European to treat the natives with skepticism regarding their humanity. Christopher Columbus himself took natives captive back to Spain to put on display for everyone to see their difference from Europeans written all over their darker-skinned bodies. The Arawak bodies on display were there to exhibit their lack of humanity before the subjects categorizing themselves as legitimately human. Columbus staged the apparition of inhumanity through the bodies of peoples invented as Indians, and these were bodies taken to the metropolis as prisoners of colonialism. Cortés' actions as conqueror were not the first practices of war against the natives, even if Columbus is historically regarded as the discoverer rather than conquistador extraordinaire.

predates the Enlightenment's *ego cogito* and sets up "another kind of skepticism [before Cartesian methodic skepticism and] became constitutive of it" (245). This skepticism is "a form of questioning the very humanity of colonized peoples" rather than "the existence of the world or the normative status of logics" (245). Thus, for Heidegger to anchor his thinking in the *cogito ergo sum* and the *ego cogito* means that he's anchoring ontology in the skepticism of the *ego conquiro* as well.

Furthermore, the conquistador's exercise of war tactics in his attitude towards the colonized without humanity also drive the self that Heidegger theorized. Following Dussel, Maldonado-Torres argues that the conquerors of the Américas arrived there and established a relationship with the native inhabitants based on the *ego conquiro*. The peoples encountered were not treated "with the kinds of actions shown at war [rather] than with the ethics that regulated [life] with other European Christians" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 247). The treatment of the natives "in the Americas is a transformation and naturalization of the *non-ethics of war*, which represented a sort of exception to the ethics that regulate normal conduct in Christian countries, to a more stable and long-standing reality of *damnation*. Damnation, life in hell, here refers to modern forms of colonialism which constitute a reality characterized by the naturalization of war by means of the

naturalization of slavery" (247, emphasis on the original). When the non-ethics of war govern coloniality, death or the possibility of an encounter with "death is not so much an individualizing factor as [much as] a constitutive feature of [the] reality" of racialized subjects (251). Death constitutes existence for the colonized and it is not an encounter of sorts but a condition of existence. This experience with death cannot be the same one for Heideggerian ontology because for Heidegger death is an individual experience separating the One from the They. Death for the colonized and racialized subjects is not something they face in a particular event or moment, but a perpetual relationship that sets "death… already beside them."

If for Heidegger death constitutes authenticity, Maldonado-Torres sets his idea of death aside because it cannot account for a different relationship between the subject and her authentification. He is suggesting that at the core of Heidegger's concept of the Dasein lies his inability to account for such a difference. Heidegger emphasizes the relationship of the One with the They "or the mass of people" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 250), and the One can authenticate herself only by way of differentiating from the They. This presumes the recognition of the One by the They as one of "the people" as a priori, and hence the encounter with death must also presume

this recognition as a matter-of-fact. The condition of death or "damnation, life in hell" that the colonized face, however, not only presupposes the impossibility of such recognition of the subject as "the people," it outright negates the racialized subject's status as people from the beginning. The *ego conquiro* establishes the inhumanity and existence-in-death of racialized subjects, and their damnation precedes Heidegger's ontology in its institution of death as a method of being. The colonized's life-as-death or life-in-death surpasses the authentification of the self through death in that the *damned*'s encounter with death is magnified exponentially from the moment of birth: the They shapes the One's existence prior to the One's fate at the hands of death, but the colonized's existence is always-already marked by death. For subjects marked by colonialism and coloniality and whose lives are structured by the non-ethics of war, "it is the encounter with daily forms of death, not the They, which afflicts them. The encounter with death always comes too late, as it were, since death is already beside them" (251). Thus, for Maldonado-Torres, Heidegger fails to recognize modernity's darker side and "that in modernity Being has a colonial side… The colonial aspect of Being, that is, its tendency to submit everything to the light of understanding and signification, reaches an extreme pathological point in war and its naturalization through the idea of race in modernity" (251). Heidegger, in his

quest to privilege ontology, "forgot" that in modernity "what one finds is not a single model of human being, but relations of power that create a world with masters and slaves" (251).[8]

Maldonado-Torres critiques Heidegger for "[forgetting] that in modernity Being has a colonial side" and for "[losing] from view the particular predicament of subjects in the darker side of [the color-line] and the significance of their lived experience for the theorization of Being and the pathologies of modernity" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 251). This critique of the limits of modernity in Heidegger is on point in terms of bringing to the surface the "underside of modernity" (Maldonado-Torres 2008; Dussel 1996). Heidegger's modernity begins in a historical and philosophical

[8] "Masters and slaves" references Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807/1979) and his dialectic as yet another point of departure for theorizing ontology and subjectivity. Hegel, like Heidegger, however, also locates himself and his thinking *not* in the *ego conquiro* and the coloniality of power. In *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (2009), Susan Buck-Morss writes of his relationship with Haiti in theorizing the dialectic, but this treatment of Haiti reduces Haiti and the Haitian Revolution as part of the same historical process as the Enlightenment rather than thinking through the revolutionary event as instantiating a different (but equal) process of liberation and modernity. Furthermore, the Haitian Revolution's relationship to the Enlightenment and its creation of Man also entrenches modernity outside the *ego conquiro* that characterizes the coloniality of power. The experiences of slavery and the Haitian Revolution partake in coloniality through their relationship with colonialism —slavery results from Conquest and the Revolution aimed to reverse colonialism's unmaking of Black peoples as human—, but the fin-de-siècle anti-colonial moment is not the 15th and 16th-century moment of discovery and conquest that is credited with giving way to coloniality. Hegel, the dialectic, and Maldonado-Torres' "masters and slaves" do not offer us a more adequate conception of ontology because none take coloniality into consideration as Quijano, Mignolo, and others (including Maldonado-Torres) theorize it. Still, the attempt at negotiating ontology by way of relations of power allows for a more critically productive way of engaging the human than Heidegger does.

moment that clearly does not take the *ego conquiro* as foundational to the formation of either history or philosophy. Thus, his concept of death and the Being authenticated through an encounter with it are operating in a time that does not include conquest as a point of departure. His temporal location begins when the *ego cogito* and the "human" were made of a secular rationality, both of which ignore relationships of power as providing an axis on which the human makes itself.

In contrast to Heidegger's limited understanding of ontology, Maldonado-Torres privileges Emmanuel Lévinas and Frantz Fanon as transgressors of Heideggerian ontology. He paraphrases Lévinas by stating that Lévinas believed that "ontology [is] equal […] to a philosophy of power" and he critiqued Heidegger for his involvement with the Nazi regime. The decolonial philosopher then centers on Fanon for his expansion of the master/slave dialectic from within the experience of colonialism (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 242). Lévinas' theorizing of European philosophy through Jewish and Christian texts offers Maldonado-Torres an entry point into what Heidegger fails to understand. When Heidegger's Being defines itself against that which is not a being, he leaves the non-beings out of his ontological framework. For Lévinas, this constitutes "the forgetting of the self-Other relation that characterizes the return of ontology as fundamental,

which can lead, not to lacking authenticity, but to a renunciation of responsibility and justice" (258). Heidegger's privileging of the ontological side of the Cartesian equation also stands on a denial of ontology to those who are not the victors of war: the Being/*Dasein* produces itself against what lies outside of itself, "produc[ing] its contrary, not nothing, but a non-human or rather an inhuman world" in the process (257). This entails "the violation of the meaning of human alterity to the point where the alter-ego becomes sub-alter. Such a reality, typically approximated very closely in situations of war, is transformed into an ordinary affair through the idea of race, which serves as a crucial role in the naturalization of the non-ethics of war through practices of colonialism and (racial) slavery" (257). Heidegger's exclusion of an ideology of power in his philosophy also ignores that "violation of the meaning of human alterity," and the ontology that occupies his world does not take into consideration an account of modernity from within colonialism.

While Lévinas theorizes ontology based on a relationship of responsibility and justice between the Self and the Other, Fanon theorizes ontology from a particular encounter between the imperial Self and the Other it makes inhuman. Fanon, in other words, thinks of ontology as the relationship of the conqueror and the conquered. The point he uses as the

instantiation or hailing of the Black subject as the enslaved self —"Look a Negro!"— is what Maldonado-Torres states "is the point of departure for Fanon to begin to articulate what might be referred to as the existentialia of the 'subject' of the coloniality of Being" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243). Since Heidegger vanquishes from ontology those that cannot attain the ontological leverage of the Being, Maldonado-Torres borrows from Fanon to refer to these "colonized Dasein" as the *damné* as or condemned of the earth (251, 253). When Fanon argues for an understanding of the Black subject as that which "is not a being or simply nothingness [and that] the Black is something else" (253), he is providing a correlative to the being excluded from Heideggerian ontology.

Hence, Fanon and the *damné* exist in a reality that is characterized by the everyday possibility of death because life under colonialism is "life in hell" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 247). For these subjects of colonialism, "modernity changed the way of achieving authenticity: they already live with death and are not even 'people'" because their very humanity has been denied to them by their white masters (251). The *damné*'s life in hell – *damnation*– cannot access authenticity in Heidegger because the possibility of facing death occurs on completely different experiences of modernity. Whereas the *Dasien* must face death as a way to constitute their individuation

from the lesser beings and the They, for Fanon the mortality of the *damné* is achieved not by choice:

> There is, first of all, the fact that the colonized person, who in this respect is like men in underdeveloped countries or the disinherited in all parts of the word, perceives life not as a flowering or a development of an essential productiveness, but as a permanent struggle against an omnipresent death. This ever-menacing death is experienced as endemic famine, unemployment, a high death rate, an inferiority complex and the absence of any hope for the future. All this gnawing at the existence of tends to make of life something resembling an incomplete death (Fanon 1965, 128; quoted in Maldonado-Torres 2007, 254-255).

The difference between Heidegger and Fanon rests on a question of choice and agency. While the self in Heidegger turns on an axis of agency as the One chooses to authenticate himself through death, the self in Fanon "lacks the opportunity to descend into Hell" because his life is already in hell and is not at all given the choice of death (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 255). The Black subject cannot turn towards death to constitute his reality, but this is not due to a lack of agency. The agency of Blackness is exercised as a turn away from death on an everyday basis rather than a turn towards it. If colonial subjects are damned to live everyday under the threat of death, their livelihood can only exist if they resist the everyday attempts at ending their life. It is "for this reason [that] decolonization, deracialization, and des-gener-acción (in sum, decoloniality) emerge not through an encounter with

one's own mortality, but from a desire to evade death, one's own but even more fundamentally that of others" (251).

Maldonado-Torres argues that

> the 'essence' of Blackness in a colonial anti-black world is part of a larger context of meaning in which the non-ethics of war gradually becomes a constitutive part of an alleged normal world. In its racial and colonial connotations and uses, Blackness is an invention and a projection of a social body oriented by the non-ethics of war (2007, 255).

In turn, he says, Fanon's articulation of a subaltern ontology structured by war can be seen as a critique of the construction of modernity vis-a-vis the non-ethics of war:

> we can see now that when Fanon called for war against colonialism, what he was doing was to politicize social relocations which were already premised on war… [Fanon] was countering the force and legitimacy of a historical system (European modernity) which utilized racism and colonialism to naturalize the non-ethics of war. He was doing a war against war oriented by "love," understood here as the desire to restore ethics and to give […] a proper place to trans-ontological and ontological differences (256).

Fanon's "love" as a decolonial project is where Maldonado-Torres sees the coloniality of being expressed in its utmost potential. Fanon's war counters European modernity by way of an ideological warfare that is itself derived from within modernity, since his anticolonial war tactics result from modernity's non-ethics of war. This pinning down of anti-colonial violence within modernity's own trenches in a way restores the very center of

modernity's established proper ontology: "I think, therefore I am." Maldonado-Torres argues that the modality of love practiced by Fanon in his meta-war against the non-ethics of war is premised on a particular purpose: "to restore ethics and to give it a proper place to trans-ontological and ontological differences" within that which excluded them in the first place. In other words, love in Fanon's Blackness seeks to change the center of ontological enunciation established by Heidegger's rewriting of the modern Western philosophical tradition and modernity's ontological self. This rethinking of modernity's ontology from Fanon's "first phenomenology of the Manichean colonial world, understood properly as a Manichean reality and not solely as ontological" (256), makes modernity and the modern condition in light of the colonial difference and restores the ethics excluded by the *ego conquiro*.

Fanon's insertion of ethics and the experience of coloniality into the exclusionary equation of modernity's ontology is a radical ideology in its own right. Fanonian love, however, also re-legitimates modernity as the modus operandi for those who occupy trans-ontological and ontological colonial difference, and does not allow for an-other Being that is not always-already based on exclusion from Western modernity's ontology. The insertion of subaltern reality forces this Western process to account for the experiences

excluded from ontology through the non-ethics of war. Thus, the insertion of ethics, love and the questioning of modernity's ontology have but one goal: "to restore ethics and to give it a proper place to trans-ontological and ontological differences" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 256). The use of "proper place" here assumes not only a "desire to restore ethics," I see it as also assuming a sense of belonging to that place from where trans-ontological and ontological differences were originally expelled. Restoring these other ontologies to their proper place reconstitutes their recognition as part of humanity, but it also makes it difficult if not impossible to imagine a humanity that exists as a human altogether separate and different from that the human condition of modernity proper. Black in Fanon "is not a being or simply nothingness. The Black is something else. The enigma of blackness appears as the very radical starting point to think about the coloniality of Being" (253). Still, the war against war, driven by a desire or love to restore ethics and other modes of being into modernity's Being, ends up betraying its own radicality.

Blackness as that which is not a being nor nothingness abandons its radical stance from which to create the coloniality of Being when the goal of Fanon's love is to wage a war against war. This battle has one outcome and one outcome only: restore modernity from within, not beside it otherwise.

While this move does indeed bring ethics into modernity's non-ethics of war, it brings Blackness —the an-other something else— toward the center to be understood as part of the modern, inevitably restoring the whole to its part and vice-versa. Blackness, in other words, is no longer not being nor nothingness, and its "something else" is to be taken in by the modern. Touched and expelled by modernity, Fanonian ontology wants a more inclusive modernity by fighting a war to restore ethics by way of said war. In the end, Blackness' desire for ethics is a desire to partake in modernity and become a constituent of modern ontology, one that understands Being as colonial and modern, but very modern nonetheless. There is no outside of modernity for the coloniality of Being if this mode of Blackness is taken as its starting point, because modernity is its end goal. Fanon's war is a radical standpoint that forces modernity to remake its ontology with the colonial difference in mind, but I would question Maldonado-Torres' privileging it as being the sole existentialia of the coloniality of being. Fanonian ontology is framed by coloniality, but it desires to be made of the same essence as the existentialia of the original subject of modernity. This ideology of subaltern ontology moves towards and seeks incorporation into the center, not to exist within and besides Western modernity.

Love as a decolonial project to counteract war with more war is theorized from the subjectivity of the *damné*, that is, the Black slave. This particular experience of colonialism and violence that Maldonado-Torres privileges as the starting point for his project theorizing the coloniality of being: "reflection on the coloniality of Being requires elucidation of the fundamental existential traits of the black and the colonized," he says (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 253). Although as a starting point "black" and "colonized" are mentioned separately, the former's ontological weight (or lack thereof) incorporates the latter's when the philosopher uses the *damné* as equal to the colonized, and *damnation* as representative of the experience of colonialism for all colonized/racialized peoples. As with the problematic of projecting 19th and 20th-century notions of nation and colonialism onto the 15th and 16th-century Conquest of the Americas, he uses a 20th-century Fanonian ontology to theorize a coloniality originating much earlier in the first mode of colonialism. Maldonado-Torres' genealogy tracing Being from the *ego conquiro* to *damnation* links the two moments of conquest that created the Indian and the Black ontologies as subjects of imperial and racist projects. In a sense, I wonder to what extent this privileging a 20th-century Africana thought as a primary example of the "existentialia of the 'subject' of the coloniality of Being" impacts the first mode of colonialism.

Fanon's point of departure speaks to a more recent mode of colonialism that although intimately connected to the first mode of conquest, but it is also far removed from it temporally. In his quote cited earlier, Fanon places himself and his ideologies of race and ontology within a 20th-century mode of colonialism by placing his definition of man —and by extension the human— as the subject dwelling in underdeveloped countries and in discarded parts of the First World. He is not thinking of man, race or ontology within a different time period or an earlier experience of colonialism and damnation. The Being that is hailed in "Look a Negro!" is a subject in Fanon's historical reality, it is a subject born from the calling and recognition, and it is reminiscent of the Requerimiento's scenes of subjection involving the conquerors of America and the natives. An ideal of humanity and inhumanity was created in the invention of Africa and the invention of America, as well as the Negro and barbarian subjects of such (in)humanities. Beyond their historical occurrence, what sets the two moments of colonial encounter apart is the manner in which recognition and calling are enacted in each one. In Fanon, the Black subject is hailed by the literal verbal utterance and the conscious recognition of the Being as that "Negro" being called forth; but in the first mode of colonialism/modernity, verbal communication and recognition were impossible on a common linguistic register between

the natives and the invading Europeans. The Indians and their conquerors practiced different if not opposing modes of speech, so their discovery and conquest set a record where language was incapable of constituting subjectivity proper as illustrated by Fanon's thinking. What language's inability to constitute subjectivity did create, however, was a measurement of humanity as the natives were reduced to pagans when colonizer and colonized first set eyes on each other. Instead of language, recognition and constitution of Being was an ontology created by human action (i.e. the ritualistic Requerimiento and Pizarro's giving Atahualpa the Bible). That initial moment of communication made Europe's linguistic speech and writing powerless to conjugate subjectivity through language alone. Subjection in the terrain of first mode of colonialism required engaging mobile bodies to make communication and relationality possible, and what resulted was an idea of humanity (or divinity, supra-human gods) based on the evaluation of the bodies and their behavior in question. The 15th and 16th-century colonial encounter, and the incommensurable knowledges instantiated in that primary moment, displace Fanon "as the existentialia of the 'subject' of the coloniality of Being" in that these set language and consciousness as an improper way of constituting subjectivity. The

coloniality of Being, I would suggest, must also address these temporal and historical experiences when theorizing subjectivity and ontology.

Recall here that Maldonado-Torres begins his analysis of coloniality by locating it explicitly in the discovery and conquest of the Américas: "Coloniality emerges in a particular socio-historical setting, that of the discovery and conquest of the Americas... Coloniality refers, first and foremost, to the two axes of power that became operative and defined the spatio-temporal matrix of what was called America" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243). Like his crediting of Mignolo for coining the term "coloniality of being," he credits the sociologist Anibal Quijano for theorizing the two axes of power

> The codification of the differences between conqueror and conquered in the idea of 'race', a supposedly different biological structure that placed some in a natural situation of inferiority to the others. The conquistadors assumed this idea as the constitutive, founding element of the relations of domination that the conquest imposed… The other process was the constitution of a new structure of control of labor and its resources and slavery, serfdom, small independent commodity production and reciprocity, together around and upon the basis of capital and the world market (Quijano 2000, 533; quoted in Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243-344).

For Quijano, race and a reconstruction of a capitalist system emerged in a very particular historical moment and constituted the coloniality of power. Building from his argument, Maldonado-Torres cites the 16th-century

discussion over the Indians' possession of souls as the beginning of race in the modern/colonial world:

> Quijano locates [the coloniality of power] in discussions about whether the Indians has souls or not. New identities were created in the context of European colonization: European, white, Indian, black and mestizos. A characteristic feature of this type of social classification is that the relation between the subjects is not horizontal but vertical in character. That is, some identities depict superiority over others. And such superiority is premised on the degree of humanity attributed to the identities in question (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 244).

The trial was animated by the coloniality of power in that the mode of relationality exercised in Valladolid was a social hierarchy that placed the Indians as inferior to the Spanish because of their biological make up. However, along with race and capitalism, the Americas' experience with colonialism rests on a third, if not primary, axis of power that Quijano and Maldonado-Torres do not take into account here: "America" had to be invented in the process of discovering, conquering, and administrating it. European expansion into the New World territories and New World peoples likewise also extended the growth of capitalism, but European social relations were not organized around biological notions of racial difference. The origins of race as a hierarchy of humanity explicitly derive from the invention of America as well. The emphasis on conquest in Quijano and Maldonado-Torres is "the codification of the differences between

conquerors and conquered in the idea of 'race,'" but the conquest began much earlier when Columbus first set eyes and feet on a world that could not be understood nor known in terms of the Old World (Rabasa 1993). The image of the conqueror that these two have in mind is the same one that characterizes Dussel's *ego conquiro*: Cortés, not Columbus. Invention, race and world capitalism, of course, are undeniably the three axes that mark the discovery and conquest of the Americas as an exceptional moment in history.

For Quijano and Maldonado-Torres, coloniality became the "darker side" of modernity when the question regarding the Indians' humanity was proposed: Did the Indians have souls? Since the possession of a soul was the Christian measurement of human existence, the very proposition questioned the Indians' level of humanity. According to Maldonado-Torres, when the soldier-philosopher Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Fray Bartolomé de las Casas argued over the right of the Spanish Crown to wage a war against the non-Christian natives, the very nature of the argument "was framed around the question of just war" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 246). In the argument, Sepúlveda believed that the Spaniards should engage in a just war against subjects who were too inferior to convert to a superior Christianity, which made them eligible for slavery and inhumanity. Although in 1537 the Vatican

declared that Indians were indeed human, "the outcome of the discussion is not as important as the question itself," because by the time the actual question was asked, "the conquerors had already established a way of relating to the peoples that they encountered" (246). By the time the friar and the soldier were debating the legitimacy of Spain's spiritual and bloody war with the natives, the actions of the conquerors "were [already] regulated by the ethics or rather non-ethnics of war" that did not govern their relationship with other Christian peoples (247). The conquistadors' treatment of the Indians was always-already an exception to the rule of conviviality espoused among Christians, and their non-ethics of war transcended the legitimate enslavement of prisoners of war and vanquished enemies when employed in the Americas. The natives, in turn, were reduced to a life under the conditions of war and the permanent threat of death at the hands of their masters.

Situating the birth of the coloniality of power within Sepúlveda's just war argument with Las Casas leads Maldonado-Torres to argue for the simultaneous birth of the coloniality of being. The conquistador mentality espoused by the soldier-philosopher in his advancement for the enslavement of the natives is itself an exercise of the *ego conquiro*'s non-ethics of war. This mentality naturalizes the natives as the subjects of war and slavery, limiting

their existence to a life in hell, and the *damné* as the subject of the coloniality of being. Maldonado-Torres sees Fanon's damnation originating with the conquistador's conditioning the natives through "the naturalization of war by means of the naturalization of slavery, now justified in relation to the very physical and ontological constitution of peoples —by virtue of 'race'— and not to their faith or belief" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 247). When he privileges Fanon's theorizing of life under slavery, however, Maldonado-Torres sees an unbroken link between the experience of Fanonian ontology, on the one hand, and the experience of colonization and slavery established in the trial over the Indians' humanity, on the other. It is in this unquestioned slippage between the experience of indigeneity and the experience of blackness that I see an incongruence in the philosopher's logic.

The slippage between Fanon and the Valladolid trial conflates two very different forms of colonialism carried out against indigenous and Black peoples: if the latter were enslaved or understood as naturally inhuman because of their skin color and biological make-up, the former were primarily seen as subhuman in their lack of Christianity, and then their racial status was determined by this absence of rationale. While the Requerimiento was that speech act that marked the encountered natives as pagan, inferior to Christians, and hence racially different, this racialization was derived from a

religiosity that controlled Western concepts and measurements of humanity. That both indigenous and Black peoples suffered from a common damnation as a result of colonialism in the Americas is not in question, but the experience of damnation in actuality was a different relationship with the process that naturalized the non-ethics of war for natives and Black peoples. Maldonado-Torres ignores this difference in his understanding of the experience of colonialism in the Américas, and the modality of the coloniality of being he chooses is incongruent with this experience. If at the heart of his argument with Heidegger is the latter's ignorance regarding modernity's invention of the human in the terrain of colonialism, Maldonado-Torres' own understanding of racialized subjectivity is itself limited to Fanon's particular ideology of blackness and damnation. My interest here is not to dismiss the common effects of power that produced blackness and indigeneity as inhuman, but to stress the difference between the experiences where racialized bodies live with death beside them, and the experiences of millions of lives lost when the white man came to invent indigenous peoples as death-ready at the start of the Spanish imperial project. Fanon does not at all address the discovery and conquest of the Américas, and although damnation and love are radical projects with which to redress the darker side of modernity, he does not provide a more

encompassing framework for the coloniality of being in the Américas that can account for an experience of indigeneity.[9]

[9] I expand on the relationship between Fanon's *damnation* and the scenes of colonial subjection in the Americas in chapter 4, "Rehearsals of the Damned: Damnation, Freedom, Salvation."

PART I

THE INDIAN IN THE ARCHIVE

CHAPTER 1

TRAGICALLY MEXICAN:
RODOLFO USIGLI'S RACIAL PERFOMATIVITY

The question about whether the indigenous peoples of the Americas had souls or not was framed around the question of just war. In the debates that took place in Valladolid in the sixteenth century, Sepúlveda argued against Las Casas that the Spanish had the obligation to engage in a just war against subjects who, in their inferiority, would not adopt by themselves the superior Christian religion and culture. Once more, just like it happens in respect to the question about the humanity of the so-called Amerindians, the outcome of the discussion is not as important as the question itself.
— Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being"

¿Dónde está la tragedia: en el destino personal o local de las tribus, que se destruyen unas a otras, o a sí mismas, o en la conquista? ¿En el choque del hombre antiguo con sus dioses o en el choque de los dioses contra otro dios?[1]
— Rodolfo Usigli, *Primer ensayo hacia una tragedia mexicana*

Tlamahuizolli es una voz nahoa que significa "hecho sorprendente" o "suceso maravilloso," por consecuencia, milagro.[2]
— Rodolfo Usigli, *Corona de luz*

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* *All translations included in this chapter are my own unless otherwise noted.*

[1] Rodolfo Usigli, "Primer ensayo hacia una tragedia mexicana (1950)" in Rodolfo Usigli, *Teatro completo*, Vol. 5, Ed. Luis de Tavira and Alejandro Usigli. Mexico City: Fondo de cultura económica, 2005.
* *Translation*: "Where is tragedy: in the personal or local destiny of the tribes, who destroy one another or themselves, or in the conquest? In the clash between ancient man and his gods or in the battle of the gods against another god?" (277).

[2] Rodolfo Usigli's epigraph to *Corona de luz*: "Tlamahuizolli is a Nahuatl voice that means 'surprising act' or 'marvelous event,' hence, miracle" (Usigli 1979, 841).
* All Spanish citations from *Corona de luz* (1963) included in this chapter are from Usigli's *Teatro completo*, Vol. 2. Mexico City: Fondo de cultura económica, 1979. English translations are my own.

FRAY JUAN: Porque hay que pensar y que tener presente que al retirarme yo, el Emperador mandará un nuevo Obispo, un obispo laico quizá, para cumplir sus órdenes, para que los rosales florezcan en el yermo y para que la Madre de Dios deje de ser la Madre de la humanidad y sea sólo el símbolo del indio condenado a perecer.[3]
— Rodolfo Usigli, *Corona de luz*

At first glance, Rodolfo Usigli's reflection on Mexican theatre in 1950 is incoherent with Nelson Maldonado-Torres' claims regarding the ontological implications of the trial establishing that indigenous peoples had souls in 1550.[4] While the latter is arguing that the coloniality of being was founded at the same time that race and racism were created through the non-ethics of war, the former's treatise on tragedy centers on the clash between humans and the gods, and between humans alone; in Usigli, race and ontology do not yet enter the equation. Perhaps most importantly, the theatre that the playwright is theorizing for the 20th-century is four hundred years removed from the 16th-century of Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. This temporal and ideological divergence between

[3] "FRAY JUAN: We also have to think about and keep in mind that once I retire, the Emperor will send a new Bishop, perhaps a secular one, to carry out his orders, to have the roses bushes bloom in the barren wasteland and so the Mother of God no longer be the Mother of humanity and become solely the symbol of the Indian doomed to perish" (Usigli *Luz*, 878).
[4] The epigraph by Nelson Maldonado-Torres included above is taken from his essay, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept," *Cultural Studies* Vol. 21, No. 2-3 (March/May 2007): 240-270. Quote on page 246.

theatre and decolonial theory, however, is not as incommensurable as it would seem: in order to understand their modern presents in the Americas, both Usigli and Maldonado-Torres look back to the same wars of Conquest where the God of the Christians came to kill the gods of the Indians.

Maldonado-Torres's suggestion that the outcome of the 16th-century debate was not as important as the enunciation of the question itself points to the relationships of power established between the conquistadores and the peoples they claimed to discover: the natives were not their Christian neighbors and were henceforth eligible prisoners of a just and holy war. Before the Indians became legally human, they were dehumanized from the get-go. As part of his genealogy on the question of being, he suggests that as philosophers of the colonial difference, Walter Mignolo, Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, and Frantz Fanon theorize what philosophers of Western modernity (Martin Heidegger, specifically) have missed in their understandings of ontology. He argues that taken together the decolonial philosophers provide a blueprint for a more libratory project "transforming the modern/colonial world into a transmodern world: that is a world where war does not become the norm or the rule, but the exception" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 263). Fanon's experience with colonialism and his thinking from within the trenches of 20th-century colonialism become for Maldonado-Torres the place from which to begin to theorize the

"existentialia of the 'subject' of the coloniality of Being" (243), the subject created when the question over the Indians' human condition was placed on trial.

As I outline in my introductory chapter, however, the work of Fanonian ontology (*damnation*) in Maldonado-Torres (2007) does not account for an existentialia of subjectivity of the coloniality of Being that can adequately address the Américas' experience of colonialism. The line of decolonial thinking that he employs takes the first mode of colonialism begun in the 15th and 16th-century, which is a different and distant experience of colonialism than the one he especially privileges in Fanon. Damnation addresses the experience of slavery and the (un)making of non-western peoples as nonhuman in the history of the modern/colonial world, but the making of the world through the non-ethics of war began, as Quijano and Maldonado-Torres himself state, with the construction of "race" as a social-biological hierarchy in the Las-Casas-Sepúlveda trial. The invention of indigenous peoples as subhuman in this historical argument drops out of Maldonado-Torres' logic to give way to Fanonian damnation as the modus operandi for the coloniality of being, and the experience of indigeneity — from its initial invention in the conquest of the Américas to the present— is left as an impossible subjectivity of the coloniality of being.

Comparable to the decolonialist's (mis)understanding of indigeneity and the first mode of colonialism, Usigli's writing on race, colonialism and theatre offers us a place where we can begin to theorize ontology otherwise. Usigli is most often recognized as one of the founding fathers of 20th-century Mexican theatre, particularly because of his rise to cultural prominence after the Mexican Revolution. The influence of Mexico's "playwright of the Mexican Revolution" in the post-revolutionary period can be traced in the work of several renowned novelists and playwrights who have graced the Mexican stage, in particular his pupil, the novelist Jorge Ibarqüengoitia, his peer and Mexican-American playwright Josefina Niggli, and the novelist and poet Rosario Castellanos, who also wrote puppet theatre for Mexico's Instituto Nacional Indigenista. One of his earliest theatrical successes was his 1938 play *El gesticulador*, which debuted at Mexico City's Palacio de Bellas Artes in 1947. The play stages a critique of the Mexican Revolution as a failure due to the Partido Revolutionario Institucional (PRI), the political party that rose to power following the Revolution and which presided over the Mexican government for more than 70 years.[5] When the PRI cancelled *El gesticulador*'s performances, Usigli

[5] The PRI's governance ended in the 2000 presidential elections, when Vicente Fox of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) won the elections.

became the first playwright to have his work censored by the Mexican government.

Although Usigli's *El gesticulador* is the most studied piece amongst his extensive oeuvre of plays and essays on theatre, the playwright also authored a trilogy of plays that is recognized as foundational to Mexican theatre history. His *Coronas* trilogy consists of three antihistorical plays, what the playwright calls *coronas* ("crowns") staging three different points in Mexico's experience with colonialism[6]: *Corona de sombra* (1943) dramatizes Maximilian's and Carlota's reign as the country's last incarnation of imperial governance, and one that is haunted by México's first indigenous president Benito Juárez; *Corona de fuego* (1960) is a play that centers on the last Aztec emperor, Cuauhtémoc, who is tortured by Hernán Cortés and his body in pain exhibited for the sake of legitimizing the conquistador's hegemony; and *Corona de luz* (1963) is about the use of the Virgen de Guadalupe's divine apparition in a plan to convert the Aztec Indians to Christianity. According to theatre historian Patricia Ybarra, the *Coronas* did not fare well either

[6] Usigli employs the concept of "antihistorical" to refer to the national mythologies resulting from historical events, so his plays were based more on the imagination and re-imagination of history rather than history itself. Like his treatment of the Greek tragic tradition, where he is not interested in restaging the proper elements of tragedy but in creating tragedies inspired by the Greeks' aesthetic form, he believed in the theatre's potential for imagining the past rather than reproducing historical fact. See Usigli's essay, "Primer ensayo hacia una tragedia mexicana" (1950) for the playwright's discussion of theatre and history. For concise overviews of Usigli within theatre history and the *Coronas* trilogy, see Ybarra (2007) and Champagne (2007).

commercially or critically as his previous plays, and the trilogy's valued "recognition stems from its contribution to Mexican national literature, rather than its success within the theatre" (Ybarra 2007, 292). The trilogy evidently failed as Usigli's attempt at "forging a truly Mexican theater" because its production for a national audience did not create as great a social impact as the play that caused him censorship.[7] Still, just as *El gesticulador* has been recognized as exemplary for marking "the beginning of the modern era of Mexican theater," the trilogy itself also marks a turning point (Champagne 2007, 1414). The modernity of the trilogy lies not in a critique of mid-20th-

[7] Of the *Coronas*, *Sombra* is perhaps closest to *El gesticulador*'s subject matter in that both plays tackle issues of oppressive modes of governance. The former drops the stage curtain in 1927 and closes the play with Juárez' reincarnation, Erasmo, predicting the fall (failure?) of both imperial and national governments:

> ERASMO (speaking to a lunatic CARLOTA): (Rising to his feet and speaking slowly and with a solemn simplicity.) My Lady, I am seeing things too late, but at last I see how they really are. Tell Maximilian of Habsburg that México sealed its independence in 1867 thanks to him. That thanks to him the world learned a great lesson in México, and that it respects him, weak as he was. Governments have fallen since then, my Lady, and have made a revolution that has yet to finish. But the Revolution too will end one day, and then Mexicans will understand what Maximilian's death really means (Usigli 1963, 200).

The play's action is framed by a retelling of the failures of both conquest and revolution when Erasmo, the simple and solemn Indian, speaks behind a mask in the likeness of Juárez' Zapotec face: Maximilian, the last European emperor of México, was executed in 1867 by Benito Juárez, who was reinstated to the Presidency when Napoleon and his forces were defeated in the Franco-Mexican War; Juárez died in office in 1871 and General Porfirio Díaz took hold of the Presidency in 1876, beginning El Porfiriato, the 30-year dictatorship defeated in the Revolution of 1910. Arguably, the cycles of war, revolution and conquest that Erasmo references here are evidences of a prophecy: the Revolution will end and governments will rise and fall. Seen from the eyes of an Indian man (Erasmo/Juárez), such is the nature of political power in Mexico from the colonial period to the present. *El gesticulador*, it seems, fulfills *Corona de sombra*'s prophecy as it stages a PRI government under rupture, even as the latter was written decades after the former was censored.

century Mexican governance, but in the playwright's imagination of the coloniality of power and his dramatization of colonialism's effects on the present.

The precedence set by Usigli's attempt at creating a uniquely Mexican stage is founded on his subject matter (Mexican colonial history) and theatre form (tragedy): he believed his native México was the only modern nation with a cultural tradition as rich and productive as the Ancient Greeks'. Therein lies the nature of his Mexican project: a notion of theatre rooted in a quest for antiquity to recuperate an Aztec performative as the inheritor of Greek tragedy. In his essay "Primer ensayo hacia una tragedia mexicana" (1950), he argues that a performance original to the Americas can be found in the 16th-century cultural practices of the Aztecs, which should be taken as the foundation for building a modern Mexican theatre comparable to the Ancient Greeks. The artist reaches back in time to understand his present vis-à-vis the indigenous peoples' practices under Spanish rule, and to theorize the Conquest through a tragic lens. Usigli's treatise on tragedy then relegates the indigeneity of indigenous peoples to a set of practices that can only exist in the colonial period, under Cortés' presence, and completely outside the reach of the artist's own time. The *Coronas* are a theatrics of México's experience with colonialism, and I suggest that what traverses the trilogy is the indigenous subject created from this experience. His theorizing

and staging of a Mexican theatre, I argue, provides a theory of indigeneity whereby indigenous racial subjectivity is constituted through the performative. The subject born from Mexico's experience with colonialism is created as a set of practices and behaviors under the auspices of the colonial gaze, a colonizing trick that the playwright rehearses in his Mexican theatre deriving from the Conquest.

Imbedded in the coloniality/modernity of Mexican theatre is an understanding of indigeneity as an ideology of performance: the indigenous peoples in *Corona de luz* and *Corona de fuego* are made into beings when their difference is marked on the bodies acting out in native ritual processions and celebrations under the critical gaze of their conquerors.[8] As I analyze in *Corona de luz*, indigeneity is first recognized as a difference from the natives' Christian masters when these masters witness their forms of religious worship —their ceremonies deemed "pagan" and in need of extermination by way of conversion—, but when the plan to convert them fails and the

[8] *Corona de luz* is based on religious practices, both native and Christian. *Corona de fuego*, while not expressing a native or Christian religiosity per se, does include a critical scene comparing the way that the natives celebrate their reunion with the last leader of the Aztec empire, and the way the Spaniards' taking a rest to drink and be festive. In this particular scene Marina accompanies one of Cortés' soldiers to break up the native's celebration for fear they are plotting against the conquistador. *Corona de sombra* does not at all address the significance of celebrations or festivals when staging indigenous peoples, but the threat that Cortés observes in the massive gathering of Indians around Cuauhtémoc is similar to Maximilian's fear of Benito Juárez' presence haunting his throne. A massive gathering of Indians, in turn, is what Fray Juan sees as the evidence of Guadalupe's apparition in *Corona de luz*.

virginal apparition leads a massive procession and clamoring outside the Christian monastery, the Indians act out in ways that the conquerors cannot have imagined. The indigeneity created out of this performance exceeds the colonizers' logic and creates a new subjectivity. The Indians act in a communal event resulting from the apparition of God made in the likeness of a brown and female goddess, and their own apparition in massive numbers becomes a performance of excess that the Christians simply fail to understand within their limited imagination. In *Corona de luz*, indigeneity is created in native terms when the Indians act out collectively, always in a plural subjectivity and in comparison to the Spaniards taking the leading roles in the play as individual subjectivities.[9] The plurality of subjectivity made in (com)motion constitutes indigenous racial performativity, a

[9] There are only five Indian characters in *Corona de luz*, each with a very small amount of time on stage, while there are close to twenty Spaniards with major stage time; only in Act III do most of the indigenous men (the four incarnations of Juan Diego) come on stage at once, with Juan Darío speaking most of the lines. In *Corona de sombra*, although the presence of Benito Juárez lurks in the back of Maximiliano's and Carlota's lunacy, Juárez himself is never on stage and hence is forever physically absent; Erasmo Ramírez, the Mexican historian, replaces his absent presence by donning a Benito Juárez mask and appearing only at the opening and conclusion of the play. In *Sombra*'s case, an Indian frames the play's action, but indigeneity appears solely as a mimetic apparition, never the original indigenous body of enunciation. Cuauhtémoc, on the other hand, takes center stage in *Corona de fuego* as the tragic hero par excellence of Usigli's ideology of theatre, and he is only a protagonist because of his direct opposition to Cortés in defense of the Aztecs' empire and their gods. In other words, Usigli understands indigeneity primarily as an undifferentiated and plural subjectivity acting out en mass and rarely as individual subjectivities, much like the apparition of Indians at the end of *Luz* creates indigeneity as a communal clamor in the face of spiritual conquest.

performance that the ego-driven European men find excessive, too loud to comprehend outside of the bonds of slavery.

I cannot help but understand what Usigli calls "eternal México" — referring to colonialism's temporal imprint on Mexican cultural practices— as a constituent of both colonialism and coloniality. The playwright theorizes modernity through a mode of tragedy, and the eternal time of his theatre sees indigeneity as a set of practices that can only be understood from the postcolony after colonialism has already passed. He does not understand the experience of indigenous peoples whose colonial conditions have been in place since the 16th-century. "Primer ensayo" reconciles an "ancient" Aztec modality of tragedy with a Greek tragic tradition, and it outlines a theory of theatre keeping the past of ancient civilizations and the post-1910 present alive in a cycle of eternal time. This mode of tragedy, however, can only be animated through a catastrophic experience of colonialism that succinctly haunts the present: only *Corona de fuego*'s Cuauhtémoc, Usigli argues, can be modernity's authentically tragic hero. Likewise, he believed that we can only find the foundation for modern tragedy in the demise of indigenous empires at the hands of white men. I argue that as an exercise of power relations deriving from the Conquest, Usigli's New World tragedy hails Mexican Indians as subjects that cannot perform beyond the 16th-century scenes of colonial subjection. Even as this subaltern ontology haunts his present, his

theatre colonizes the living Indian by reducing her life to an ontology that is always-already dead in the past. He puts us back in a world of modernity where coloniality's purpose is to prove that Mexicans are more legitimate tragedians than the self-entitled European inheritors of Antiquity, not in the world where coloniality and modernity are two sides of the same coin. More importantly, the tragedy of Usigli's theatre subsumes the Indians' experiences with colonialism under a Mexican ethos that ironically has no place for 20th-century indigenous peoples in the nation's postcolonial present.

Tragically Mexican

Usigli's "Primer ensayo hacia una tragedia mexicana" (1950) outlines the playwright's ideas regarding the state of 20th-century Mexican theatre and situates Mexico as the modern inheritor of a form of theatre originating in classical antiquity. Since tragedy's requirements are designed around communal ideals, he argues, the writing and rewriting of Greek tragedies to the present day offer a foundation for building a truly Mexican national theatre. His Mexican inheritors of a Greek tragedy prove to be as ancient as the Greeks when he states that the ancient Aztecs practiced a religiosity and produced a hero as tragic as any of classical antiquity. The comparison

between the Greeks and the Aztecs allows Usigli to imagine an authentically modern Mexican theatre inspired by Greek tragedy without replicating its exact form and content, something he says that renowned European playwrights like William Shakespeare and Jean Racine failed to accomplish.

I argue that Usigli's theory of tragedy consciously employs an anti-historical (tragic) and a-historical idea of indigeneity, one that binds indigenous peoples to the time of precolonial Indian empires and excludes them from modernity. While the theatre he theorizes for the nation is productive in its insistence on situating the experience of colonialism as the originator of modernity along with the Renaissance, the playwright's provocation theorizes an indigeneity founded on a performative that was not coeval with his own time. Usigli finds proof of the Aztecs' equivalence to the Greeks' within Fray Juan de Zumárraga's archival documentation of the Aztecs' performances of gender, race and ontology. Instead of situating his Mexican tragic tradition within the terror that accompanied the friar's genocidal reign as the first Bishop of New Spain, however, the playwright thoroughly sidelines the friar's enterprise and highlights the Aztec performative written in Zumárraga's notes as his indigenous inheritance. He cites the Indians' performativity in four moments: the Aztec empire's reign prior to its demise by Cortés, Cuauhtémoc's tragic fall at the hands of the conquistador, Zumárraga's observation of native performances, and the

Aztec dances performed in Veracruz in 1950. The ideology of indigeneity at play in Usigli's arguments for a Mexican tragedy, in other words, only allows indigenous peoples access to the performative through antiquity and the Conquest. Only in the time of empires prior to their damnation by the conqueror can indigenous peoples create their own dramatic traditions. Although these traditions are indeed evidenced in the Aztec dances in 1950, Usigli cites them as a remnant of that precolonial time of indigenous empires and a simulacrum of the dances originally cited in the archive. In this sense, Usigli's imperial Indian past is no different than the ideology of race projected onto the Tarahumara Indians by Antonin Artaud in the 1930s. For Artaud, the Tarahumara were a primitive race that had to be positioned back in time before Cortés, since only in the time of glorious Indian empires untouched by the Conquest could the Tarahumara be the primitives he wanted them to be. Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty and Usigli's Mexican tragedy sidelined the lives of indigenous peoples occupying the same present time as the dramatists, whose theories of race and performance limit indigenous performativity to a thing of Indian pasts.[10] Without a precolonial world of ancient empires and without the friar's colonial notes to supplement his theorization of tragedy, Mexico's indigenous peoples in the 20th-century

[10] Please see chapter 3, "Spectacular Indians: Antonin Artaud and the Cruelty of Latino Performance," for my discussion of Artaud's relationship to Mexican Indians.

could not be tragedy's creators or its tragic heroes. Absent from his archival citations and not recognized as sites of tragic art forms in Mexico's present, the Indians living in 1950 were an impossible indigeneity in Usigli's own time.

Even though Usigli does not present his essay as a response to an immediate event or circumstance, he writes to address an artistic responsibility in the face of crisis.

> Corresponde a un momento del mundo en el que todo creador, tan involuntario como consciente y sincero —son las tres condiciones del creador—, se interroga sobre el papel, la función y la potencia del artista frente a las catástrofes recientes y a las catástrofes próximas… Un escritor se vuelve peligroso o inútil cuando deja de escribir literatura para escribir, es decir, para comunicar ideas que, o son muy viejas ya y están olvidadas, o no ha nacido a la forma todavía porque son parte de una embriaguez o de un ensueño y pueden, por eso, parecer tan viejas como un niño recién nacido.[11]

The radicality of Usigli's art is that it is a form of creation dedicated to social change in times of tragedy. In this mode, the aesthetics of tragedy coincide with tragic events and artists are called upon to redefine their purpose. The artist's question here is not phenomenological (*what* is an artist) as much as it

[11] "There is a moment in the world in which every creator, who is selfless as he is conscious and sincere —these are the three conditions for the one who creates—, questions himself on the artist's role, function and potential when he faces recent catastrophes and those catastrophes still to come… A writer becomes dangerous or useless when he stops writing literature to write, that is to say, to communicate ideas that are either too old or have been forgotten, or have not been given a form yet because they are part of a euphoria or daydream and as such can seem as old as a newborn child" (Usigli 1950, 256).

is existential: what is my purpose and who am I because of said purpose? This question is answered in a language that such times will more than likely not understand, however, because there is no form yet with which to express this purpose. The art forms created from tragic events put forth an aesthetic that is anachronistic: their innovation marks their very essence as art, but their newness born from tragic conditions make them unintelligible temporally and they will "appear as old as a newborn child." The art form's newness appears out of the tragedy, but tragedy's persistence in history also contributes to their anachronism. Tragic events are repeated throughout history and are then left behind, but each time a tragic event occurs the process of reckoning with its aftermath relives itself. Hence, in tragedy's aftermath, the art that is formed anew with each catastrophe partaking in this repetition brings back to life what has been thought of as "very old [or] already forgotten." The livelihood of art is born from catastrophic events and its life is the artists' creation. Thus, the answer to the artist's existence is that he must rekindle the process of reckoning with tragedy's cycle of repetition.

Art transgresses time in the face of catastrophes because the tragic nature of the event demands that it repeat the healing process as catastrophe repeats itself. The "tragic" here references the sense of calamity, mourning and historical repetition of catastrophe, and the artist must respond

adequately to address these repetitions. Logically, Usigli seemingly suggests that the dramatic art form of playwrights draws inspiration from disastrous events. He also says that it is not necessary to have historically verifiable facts and dates for ancient tragedies to be appreciated, understood and be modeled after in today's day. This lack of information "no impide, de hecho, su incorporación a la sangre nacional, su transcendencia en ella. Importa cómo escribe Sófocles la tragedia, o cómo la escribe Esquilo, porque cada uno representa la reunión del pasado supervivo con el presente en acción de vivir."[12] The lapse in years between the time of the Ancient Greeks and the present should not be an obstacle for incorporating tragedy into contemporary national blood. Rather, the temporal difference should be the very reason for superimposing or transcending tragedy onto the present. The time past between the origins and the present creation doesn't matter because creating art itself is the function of tragedy. The tragic mode of art joins together the past with the present, and in this union the past is enunciated as living in the present. Tragedy's livelihood and function in the present is conditioned by its insistence on tying the past with the present, creating a cycle to bind the time of the Ancients with the time of modernity.

[12] "[this] actually does not impede their incorporation into national blood, their transcendence into it. It matters how Sophocles writes tragedy, or how Aeschylus writes it, because each one represents the reunion of the past alive with the present in the act of living" (Usigli 1950, 260).

Binding cyclical time makes modernity operate non-linearly, and this connection between the cyclical time of the ancients and the modern's linear time is welded to what Usigli calls "tradition."

> La tradición —influencia religiosa, política e histórica— y el público contemporáneo —entidad social— exigen de modo general que el dramaturgo trate un tema histórico o mitológico nativo, conocido de los espectadores así sea en la forma abstracta de una moneda o en la apolínea de una estatua.[13]

The playwright's duty is to enliven the present. He is to keep produce "the act of living" through his creation of plays that bring the historical and mythological to the stage of the present. Contemporary audiences demand to witness national histories and national mythologies being performed, and the artist must write plays for them to consume. The demand for theatre essentially links nationalism in the present with past historical events, and in the process creates an unbroken time between past and present. In choosing to write and stage tragedies, the playwrights continue with a tradition of leaving time unbroken and unbound, producing modernity's present in a thoroughly tragic mode. Indeed, these artists make cultural production a national entity when they choose a tragic form for tradition's sake. Theirs is not an extension of Greek tragedy, but a mode of tragedy nonetheless.

[13] "Tradition (religious, political and historical influence) and the contemporary public (a social entity) demand that the dramaturge treat a native historical mythological issue known by the spectators either in the abstract form of a coin or in the godly one of a statue" (Usigli 1950, 260).

> Las Troyanas, la Andrómaca, la Hécuba de Séneca están tan alejadas de lo griego –y es lo griego de la decadencia, lo griego del tendero Eurípides, que envolvía las tragedias con papel de dioses para poder venderlas– como puedo estarlo el estilo arquitectónico español de California del colonial mexicano o éste de la pirámide. Pero Racine, pero Francia están tan lejos de Grecia como pueden estarlo del sarraceno o del tudesco y como lo están aún del suizo. Esto significa que, al atribuirse la obligación de divertir a un público no griego con temas esencialmente griegos, sin que ni ellos ni ese público tengan un solo glóbulo de sangre ática, realizan, cada uno a su manera, una falsificación inteligente y comerciable y postergan la razón de ser de su tragedia nacional.[14]

While Usigli's thinking can be narrowed down to the idea that one need not be Greek to write Greek tragedies, I believe he is pointing to something far more complicated regarding the ties between nationalism and cultural production. If tragedy can be incorporated and transcended by national blood, and tradition demands that playwrights create theatre that adequately tends to societies' needs of connecting past and present, then the artistic turn towards the tragic form becomes their national theatre's "the reason for being." The transposition of an Ancient Greek art form to contemporary national cultures may also create an artifice of tragedy's proper format, as he

[14] "Seneca's Trojan Women are as distanced from the Greek –the Greek-ness of decadency and the Greek-ness of Euripides, the storekeeper who wrapped his tragedies in paper from the gods in order to sell them– as California's Spanish architectural style could be from the Mexican colonial style or the Mexican colonial style to the pyramid. But Racine, but France are as far from Greece as they could be from the Muslim or the German, let alone the Swiss. This means that, once taking upon himself the obligation of amusing a non-Greek public with essentially Greek themes, without these nor the public having a single drop of Attic blood, these create, each in their own way, an intelligent and marketable falsification and they delay their national tragedy's reason for being" (260-261).

says Racine does when the French dramaturge falsifies the essence of tragedy for the sake of his national theatre. Racine's 17th-century replicas of Antiquity were further from the original Greek tragic essence (Seneca and Euripedes) than Racine himself was to his Muslim, German or Swiss neighbors. According to Usigli, Racine proved unable to create tragedy in a modern national form stemming from the original Antiquity because he imitated a reality that was so far from his own. Racine and his art failed to create the present for the sake of the present itself. Contrary to this, Usigli's purpose is the contemporary reproduction of tragedy and its cyclical temporality, but with tradition's emphasis on catering to a continuous reliving of the past as an enunciation in the nation's present. Beyond creating a pathological connection between a past ended and a present that refuses to end the past, the temporality Usigli's modern tragedy make national theatres part of a culture of creation surviving since the time of the ancients.

Usigli begs the quest for a Mexican understanding of tragedy because he has seen that tragedy's sense is lost in modern times. He argues that both artist and society have "extinguish[ed] in themselves and their descendants […] what Nietzsche called the pleasure or the delight of the tragic."[15] The

[15] Original: "El espectador y el autor por parejo han conspirado durante siglos para extinguir en ellos y en sus descendientes, junto con otras virtudes eternas, lo que Nietzsche llamaba el placer o el deleite de lo trágico." Translation: "The spectator and the author have for centuries equally conspired to extinguish in themselves and their

artist's responsibility —to address the public's call for a connection with the past— has no reason to exist now. Since modern man no longer seeks that connection, "the delight of the tragic is lost" to us without this cycle of creation between artist and audience. Usigli suggests that in abandoning tragedy, modernity also abandons the understanding of the human that accompanies it: "la misma de Edipo, la misma que sólo los griegos han resuelto: ¿dónde está el hombre? ¿Qué país, qué cultura, qué impulso, qué industria, qué ciencia, qué bomba o arte destructiva puede contestar: el hombre está aquí?"[16] The answer to man's existential question is not to be found in countries like "China or India, [countries] which lose men like flies or fleas in a vague and everlasting battle for vague or everlasting things or ideas, countries whose destiny continues without solution."[17] Only in Mexico can modernity recuperate tragedy and its ontological ideal: "la tragedia puede encontrar en México la tierra de su resurrección, así como encontró la de su destrucción en Colono al través de Edipo,"[18] he says.

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descendents, along with other eternal virtues, what Nietzsche called the pleasure or the delight of the tragic" (Usigli 1950, 257).

[16] "… the same [question] as Oedipus, the same one that only the Greeks have solved: where is man? What country, what culture, what impulse, what industry, what science, what bomb or destructive art can answer: is man here?" (267).

[17] Original: "China o la India, que pierden hombres como moscas o pulgas en una vaga y sempiterna lucha por cosas o ideas sempiternas y vagas… países cuyo destino sigue sin solución" (266).

[18] "tragedy can find in México the land of its resurrection, just like it found its destruction in Colonus through Oedipus" (267).

When Usigli asks himself the questions "¿dónde está la tragedia? ¿Dónde está México?",[19] he initially answers his quest for the eternity of tragedy and the eternity of nationalism in the negative:

> El origen musical —a la vez melódico, armónico y rítmico, a la vez religioso y profano— que atribuye Nietzsche a la tragedia … me erizó y me hizo dudar… ¿tenían los antiguos mexicanos un sentido, un sentimiento de la música comparables a los de los áticos de hace 2,500 años? Los huehuetls, teponaxtles y demás instrumentos de percusión sobrevivos permiten dudarlo: no hay armonía …[20]

Following his reading of Nietzsche's treatise on *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* (1872), Usigli declares that the ancient Mexicans had no harmony that could be comparable to the ancient Greeks; his desire for Mexican tragedy fails for a moment. However, he also says that this lack of musical harmony between the Ancient Mexicans and the Ancient Greeks is not a measure of complete incommensurability. What crosses their incommensurable eternal essences is the ritualistic religiosity that characterized both antiquities. Greek tragedy and modern Mexico are made commensurable by inventing the Indians of Ancient Mexico as also eternal:

> En un sentido lato, quizás universal, el azteca… tiene puntos de contacto con el griego. Por ejemplo, en los festivales. Todavía

[19] "Where is tragedy now? Where is México?" (Usigli 1950, 270).

[20] "The musical origin —at once melodic, harmonious and rhythmic, at the same time religious and profane— that Nietzsche attributes to tragedy … shook me and made me ponder… did the ancient Mexicans have a sense, a sentiment of music comparable to those of the Greeks from 2,500 years ago? The huehuetls, teponaxtles and other percussion instruments that have survived make me question so [because] there is no harmony…" (270).

> en la Colonia, cuando fray Juan de Zumárraga, el vasquísimo vasco, prohíbe las procesiones, las prohíbe porque el natural aprovecha la coyuntura para vestir de animal o de mujer y moverse "con meneos deshonestos y lascivos." En 1950 puede comprobarse el episcopálico dicho en el carnaval de Veracruz. Hay aquí un paganismo inherente a la celebración, una abolición de las fronteras de familia, de sociedad y de sexo, comunes, por lo demás, a toda multitud en trance de regocijo, e idénticos a los que presiden los festivales de Dionisos en Atenas. Se trata de un estado *necesario*.[21]

Tragic commensurability is made possible by an ancient grandeur of New World indigeneity that is "alive even in the colony" and under the friar's colonizing gaze. Fray Juan de Zumárraga is the one who forbids the native festivals where their practices transgress his Christian ideals. The natives' cultural particularity exhibited through the outlawed processions is an excessive visuality: their bodies "crossdress as animals and wom[en], they shake [their bodies] dishonestly and lasciviously," and their pagan celebrations "abolish" the familial, gender and social norms of Christianity. The enslaved native, presumed to be male and masculine, transgresses the colonizer's mindset when his body acts out of bounds, literally moving to a different musical rhythm than his masters. This excessive visuality displayed

[21] "In a broad sense, universal perhaps, the Aztec […] has points of contact with the Greek. For example, festivals. Alive even in the colony, when Fray Juan de Zumárra, the über-Basque priest, outlaws the processions, he forbids them because the native takes advantage of the situation to dress up as animal or a woman and to move [his body] 'in dishonest and lascivious shakes.' The priest's observation can be proven in 1950 in the Veracruz carnival. There is a certain paganism inherent to the celebration, a disregard for the norms guarding the family, society and sex, common, perhaps, in every group in a pleasurable trance, and identical to those that prevail in the festivals of Dionysus in Athens. It is about a *necessary* state" (271), emphasis in the original).

in full affront to the prohibition of the processions centers the body as that which is both the agent and tool of transgression. The logic behind Fray Juan's prohibition is to stop the processions from continuing the natives' traditions as he leads the conversion of the practitioner towards Christianity. His target of illegal behavior, as Usigli puts it, is the site of transgression: the male body that alters gender and humanity by dressing as both animal and woman. At the heart of the problem of incomplete conversion is not a practice of religious processions, but the bodies that *act out* in them.[22] The Indian constitutes his existence as indeed another way of being through these ritual processions-turned-acts of rebellion, performing an ontology that is incomprehensible as human by Christian logic.

Usigli uses the subaltern ontology constituted through the Indians' performance as starting point for finding a true Mexican Tragedy. What the Aztecs' cultural performance had in common with the Greeks', it seems, was the connection between the human body exhibiting-making itself in relation to the communal.

> En el estado dionisiaco, que es necesario, se pierden individualidades, individuación en todos los aspectos: el hombre retrocede para moverse en un cosmos caótico todavía, en tanto que en el estado apolíneo, igualmente necesario para la tragedia, la individuación y la individualidad se recobran y son

[22] The friar's outlawing of religious processions and the exhibition of indigenous bodies moving out of bounds is repeated in Usigli's Corona de luz, where Zumárraga takes center stage as a protagonist of the play.

> tanto más superadas, tanto más superiores, cuanto que parten de una renovada experiencia del caos.[23]

Usigli is thinking here of the category of the human in terms of transgressing the individual's particularity for the sake of tragic chaos; individuality must be overcome for the sake of a "renewed experience of chaos," he suggests. If tragedy must stage the communal's desires, the "losing [of] individualities, individuation in every sense of the word" leads man to move towards an existence beyond himself. Tragic existentialia demands that man live not within himself but within the bounds of the communal. The Aztec, understood as that entity exhibiting himself in processions and carnivals, became for Usigli that undifferentiated individuality that could only be understood in relation to a set of communal practices. This overcoming of native particularity for the sake of the communal is the root of Usigli's Mexican tragedy.

Usigli erases the commensurability between Aztec and Greek, however, when he compares the formal aspects of both tragedies side by side. While Troy and Tenochtitlan, Agamemnon and Iphigenia, and Moctezuma and Cortés are all equally important, in México, "un pueblo saturado del complejo de Edipo en su peor aspecto, no tenemos

[23] "In the Dionysian state, which is necessary, individualities and individuation in all aspects is lost: man withdraws from himself to move within a cosmos that is still chaotic, so that in the Apollonian state, equally necessary for the tragedy, individuation and individuality are recuperated and are more overcome, more superior, so much so that they partake in a renewed experience of chaos" (Usigli 1950, 271).

antecedentes históricos o dinásticos en el orden incestuous, por lo cual la tragedia de Edipo no cabe en México."[24] The playwright that does continue with this tragedic tradition, he says, is William Shakespeare, "el único moderno dotado del sentimiento y del carácter de la tragedia."[25] Shakespeare is limited, however, because in not having lived a historical tragedy comparable to Mexico's experience with colonialism, "deja de escribir la tragedia misma en su proporción… Tiene el carácter pero no la tragedia."[26] The experience of colonialism is expressed in Usigli's repetition of the Friar's colonial gaze, and in his condemnation of the destruction of the Aztec empire at the hands of Cortés: "¿tenemos, como Shakespeare, héroes de tragedia sin posibilidad de una tragedia constituida, o tenemos, como Sófocles, tragedia y héroe fundidos en la fuerza, en la sangre, en el terror, en la destrucción, en el horror y la piedad?"[27] The point of separation between Mexico's and Shakespeare's tragic heroes is that the Mexicans embodied

[24] "in a country saturated by the Oedipus complex in its worst aspect, we do not have historical or hereditary antecedents of the incestuous kind, which is why Oedipus' tragedy does not fit [or does not belong] in México" (Usigli 1950, 274).

[25] *Original*: "Shakespeare es, claramente, el único moderno dotado del sentimiento y del carácter de la tragedia: pero a la vez que escribe al héroe trágico, deja de escribir la tragedia misma en su proporción… Tiene el carácter pero no la tragedia…" *Translation*: "Shakespeare is clearly the only modern [playwright] gifted with the sentiment and the character of tragedy: but at the same time that he writes the tragic hero, he stops writing tragedy in its full capacity… he has the character but not the tragic…" (258).

[26] See translation in footnote 24.

[27] "do we have, as Shakespeare does, tragic heroes without the possibility of a fully-formed tragedy, or do we have, like Sophocles, tragedy and tragic hero founded on the strength, blood, terror, destruction, horror and piety?" (275).

both the essence of the tragic hero and the tragedy itself. Shakespearean tragic heroes do not have "the possibility of a fully-formed tragedy."

The tragic hero par excellence of Usigli's tragedy is Cuauhtémoc, the emperor tortured and killed by Cortés in his destruction of the Aztec empire in the 16th-century. For the Mexican playwright, the Aztec emperor was a tragic hero because his death was unique:

> Que Cuauhtémoc era [héroe de tragedia], hiere también la vista en la interpretación del nombre, en la tortura, en el falso juicio, en la veraz ejecución… Cuauhtémoc representa el mundo que sólo se mezcla con el sufrimiento porque es parte de su destino y que, como el héroe trágico griego, dice: "Hágase tu voluntad," pero no en un sentido resignativo, sino en el sentido de: "Aquí vengo yo a cumplir tu voluntad." Esto es activo y no pasivo… y es esencialmente trágico.[28]

Shakespeare may be credited as the only modern playwright to have written tragic heroes like the Greeks, but his heroes failed to experience tragedy to the same extent as the indigenous emperor enslaved and executed by his white master. Like the Aztec performative equivalent to the Greek, Mexican drama surpasses Shakespearean tragedy, and it makes México the only country eligible to continue in the tradition of the Ancient Greeks. Usigli's claims, I suggest, also point to something beyond the battle for a Greek

[28] "That Cuauhtémoc was [a tragic hero], it also hurts to see the interpretation of his name, his torturing, the false trial, the verifiable execution… Cuauhtémoc represents the world that only blends with suffering because it is part of his destiny and because, like Greek tragic hero, he says: 'Let your will be done,' but not in a sense of defeat, but in the sense of 'Here I come to have your will be done.' This is active and not passive… and it is essentially tragic" (Usigli 1950, 273).

inheritance, something oscillating between the Ancient and the Modern: the Renaissance Man and the Colonial Man all share in the making of modern tragedy. Shakespeare's Renaissance theatre is leveled with the Aztecs' tragic fall at the hands of yet another European man. Cortés' war against the Aztec empire, his capture and enslavement of Moctezuma, and his torturing and exhibition of Cuauhtémoc's body in pain are what lay behind Cuauhtémoc's construction as the "Fallen Eagle," the only authentically tragic hero. The Renaissance's conquering man and artist-man partake in the making of a Renaissance modernity, but the darker side of this modernity created by the former is where Usigli finds a tragedic tradition that exceeds the latter's. The Renaissance artisan's theatre, because it does not arise from the ashes "founded in strength, blood, terror, destruction, horror and pity" (275) experienced by the indigenous fallen by Cortés, is displaced as the only modern inheritor of Sophocles' tragedy.

Usigli outlines a Mexican tragic tradition through a notion of eternal time:

> Cada pueblo posee una eternidad propia, que a menudo no se sabe de dónde emana. Y ay de aquel que no la posea. Me refiero al México eterno, medido con una cinta métrica ideal que puede aplicarse al mundo maya o al tolteca, al azteca o al colonial: al mundo porfiriano o al mundo de la revolución. No hablo del México que vive —y que vive tan mal y de un modo tan paupérrimo, artificial y abyecto en 1950—, sino del México que sobrevive con y pero sobre Chichén y Tollán; con y por

> sobre Moctezuma y Cortés; con y más allá de Hidalgo y Díaz y Madero y Cárdenas y los demás.[29]

The playwright is searching for a Mexican tragedy in 1950, but this search for theatre is bent on excluding the nation's present condition because Mexico was undergoing catastrophic events. Mexico is living in such "bad condition and in such a poverty stricken, artificial and abject [times]" that this present cannot address the real tragedy without turning to the aesthetic. The turn to tragedy here is the Usigli's answering a call to address the tragic nature of his catastrophic present. The Mexico that he is creating here is one that exists outside of time, or if not outside of time, it is a Mexico that transcends a linear time from the precolonial period and the colony to the postcolonial. "México" is an eternal essence that encompasses both the indigenous and the non-indigenous: the Maya, Toltec, Aztec, Chichén and

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[29] "Every country posses its own eternity, its origin most often unknown. And I'm sorry for that one which does not posses it. I am talking about eternal México, measured with an ideal metric tape applicable to the Mayan world or the Toltec, Aztec or colonial one: the world of Porfirio Díaz or the world of the Revolution. I am not talking about the México that lives —and that lives in such bad condition and in such a poverty-stricken, artificial and abject year of 1950—, but about the México that survives with and over Chichén and Tollán; with and over Moctezuma and Cortés; with and beyond Hidalgo and Díaz and Madero and Cardenas and the rest of them" (Usigli 1950, 267).

The historical names and places referenced here span centuries if not millennia of Mesoamerican history. "Al mundo porfiriano" refers to Porfirio Díaz's presidency of México, which lasted from 1876 to 1911. Chichen Itza and Tollán are pre-colombian cities, the latter being part of the Toltec empire and the former belonging to the Maya. Moctezuma was the Aztec emperor defeated by Cortés, the Spanish conquistador. Miguel Hidalgo was the Catholic priest who partook in leading the Mexican war of independence from Spain in 1810. Francisco Madero began the Mexican Revolution to oust Díaz from power in 1910, and Lázaro Cárdenas served as México's president 1834-1840.

Tollán, Moctezuma, Cortés, Hidalgo, Díaz, Madero, and Cárdenas can be organized temporally based on their historical time periods, existing together at once and forever in Usigli's present.[30] Usigli's writing in the 1950s stands on the Mexico created by these peopless and places past, and this Mexico survives them and their historical existence. México's eternal essence exceeds the particularity of these peopless, places and histories, but the nation's excess is itself derived from particularities that existed with a limited time. The playwright's tragedy marks the historical peopless within a different temporal scale than Mexico's own because the nation supersedes them all. In superseding them, national time endows them with a lifespan that extinguishes to give life to Mexico's eternity.

In turn, Mexico's eternity is derived from historical time broken up into periods: precolonial, colonial, postcolonial, and revolutionary. While the former two are invented by formal colonial projects —the precolonial ends where the colonial one begins—, the latter two are historical experiences of coloniality after the demise of the former. The indigenous and the colonial names that Usigli uses are all employed as a result of the Conquest, as it is this system of events that marks the turning point between the pre-colonial

[30] Notice that the iconography of historical peoples and places making up Usigli's Mexican time excludes women and post-Colombian places, México being the exception to the latter as it became a space and place carved from the Conquest. Mexico's eternity is thoroughly masculine and pre-Colombian, which makes the playwright's search for a truly Mexican theatre itself derived from an eternal masculinity and indigeneity.

and the colonial periods. The historical moment encompassing the encounter, discovery and colonization of the Americas was an invention of sorts, from "América" to the Indian native, and so it also marks the beginning of knowing-inventing the native inhabitants as either "el mundo maya o al tolteca, al azteca" for the European worlds who did not know of Chichén y Tollán. The worlds that became these worlds of indigenous empires in the post-discovery colonial world did not exist before the colony. Furthermore, the inhabitants who lived in the lands invaded by the Spaniards did not exist as "Indians" before Columbus called them by a name he invented form them. In the postcolonial world of the 20th-century, the names that occupy Usigli's Mexican imagination are those of the Mexican Revolution: Díaz, Madero, Cárdenas. But between the colonial and the postcolonial, what Usigli strategically skips over in his Mexican temporal scale is the anti-colonial 19th-century that resisted the colonial regimes of Spain, France and the United States. He names the Catholic priest credited as one of the first to rise up against Spanish control of Mexico in 1810, but Hidalgo's is one name compared to the multiple ones of the Mexican Revolution. Not surprisingly, his preference is clear and the Revolution takes precedence.

Usigli's essay does include the colonial and postcolonial on the same temporal scale, and given the linear connection between these two historical

periods —the latter follows the former in a linearly-progressive order—, the former's end marks the beginning of the latter, and it impacts it in the process. That Usigli is theorizing a theatre for his Mexican present anchored in both the colonial condition and the postcolonial revolution suggests that his theory rests on an effect of formal colonial projects. The long anti-colonial 19th-century that bridges the gap between the Conquest, the colonial world, and the postcolonial revolution also marks the end of formal colonization from Europe and the beginning of national/postcolonial history for non-natives in the Américas. Its absence in his theory and its exclusion from a Mexican eternal time makes the jump from the colonial to the postcolonial a troubling move. The emphasis on including pre-colonial indigenous history alongside the colonial period, but excluding the anti-colonial as the logical step between them and the postcolonial, is telling of the playwright's unwillingness to address indigeneity and the present without an attachment to a Conquest past.

The tragic temporality of Mexican theatre, I argue, reveals a certain discomfort when it comes to addressing indigenous peoples as part of Usigli's nationalism. When he first employs the term "antiguos mexicanos" he expresses a silence as to the identity of these ancient Mexicans and does not name. Then, when he refers to Mexico's eternal time, he now names them as Chichen, Tollán, Moctezuma, and the natives playing instruments

and dancing in the festivals, without recognizing the role colonialism played in what he knows about them. The imperial cities existed as part of the Aztec and Mayan indigenous empires before the arrival of the Spanish; Moctezuma was an emperor waiting for the god who came and destroyed him and his Aztec empire; and the Indians of the processions and festivals were under the rule of a white man. Usigli, however, makes no acknowledgement of the colonial projects that circumscribed these Indians. He does cite Zumárraga's observation, but this citation does not reference the friar's genocide. The Veracruz festival is one of two moments in his essay where Usigli mentions the year 1950, and it is the one point in the essay where he addresses indigeneity in the present. Ironically, the Indian appears in the 20th-century only as evidence of an observation of indigenous peoples being exercised by the colonial authorities centuries earlier. As with the jump from the colony to the postcolony, Usigli's understanding of the carnival is also a derivate of conquest because he observes the dancing brown bodies as the embodiment of a performative cited in Zumárraga's notes. His observation rehearses the friar's colonial voyeurism by seeing the Veracruz dancers rehearse an Aztec performative, and not understanding that their brown bodies were producers of a 20th-century theatre that was all their own. His colonial gaze doesn't see their dances as a repertoire of the present, but as the survivor of a performative ontology cited in the archive.

When questioned about the archeological nature of this work —is he digging up the past?—, Usigli answers that he is not looking for false traces of something from which he is far removed. On the contrary, he says that

> Mi comprobación cotidiana durante muchos años me alienta a creer que todos los viejos mitos —continuados en al arquitectura colonial, en la adaptación al rito católico, y en un indefinible sentimiento que nos traiciona cuando pretendemos pasar por europeos— son parte viva, globular, del mexicano de hoy.[31]

His search for a Mexican tragedy situated in the time of the Ancient Aztecs is not a search for an ancient grandeur, but a search for what is already here, alive and now. The ancient myths are the continuous link between a particular past and the present, and their unbroken continuity becomes the foundation for Usigli's Mexican present. The playwright's relationship to archeology is similar to his take on history: their proper form is denied, if not outright negated, in his take on a Mexican tragedic tradition. His rejection of archeology and history are bent on a denial of linear time because these would presume a definitive end and beginning, thus invalidating the cyclical time of tragedy and the form of tragedy itself. Likewise, denying linear time, history and archeology as proper measurements and vehicles for accessing indigeneity allows Usigli to think of a Mexican present where indigeneity is

[31] "My daily verification for many years helps me believe that all of the old myths — continued in colonial architecture, in their adaptation to Catholic rites, and in an indefinable emotion that betrays us when we pretend to pass for European— are a part of the living DNA of the Mexican today" (Usigli 1950, 275).

relegated to ahistorical myths. His Mexican present makes indigeneity survive from the time of the Ancients to the time of his present, and it survives colonial terror through DNA, architecture and Catholic rituals displaying the time of the colony. Even though he dismisses his turn to the past as a search for an ancient grandeur of Indian empires, the Mexican body exhibits an indigeneity that does not exist in the present but in a very particular past of Aztec emperors and ancient myths. The only indigenous peoples he includes in the temporal scale of tragedy are those whose past he can enunciate in the present, not the Indians enunciated as a present under a colonialism *not* already past.

If the Conquest and its colonial aftermath quite literally forced the natives into a hellish existence, the undoing of Spanish colonization in the 19th-century never comes to liberate the indigenous peoples because Usigli does not at all account for anticolonial liberation. Since Mexican eternal time supercedes the time of the colonial and the postcolonial, I am left to assume that the natives' temporal relations to the Conquest, the colony, the postcolony, and the revolutionary are equally overridden by Mexican time. Usigli's turn to tragedy in a catastrophic 1950 excludes indigenous peoples from the present when he chooses to address the modern tragic event solely through the past. The Indian survives in Mexico's present as a faint

reminiscence of a dead imperial grandeur, one that Usigli invents through ahistorical plays and the eternal time of tragedy.

Usigli fails to account for anticolonialism in his temporal scale and his theatre henceforth also rests on an effect of colonization, leaving indigeneity always-already in colonial chains. It is logical, then, that his ideal tragic hero is the last Aztec emperor because he faced the Conquest, "algo que no previó ningún tragediante griego."[32] The destruction of the Indian gods sets Mexican tragedy apart from the Greeks, and this experience of colonialism changes tragedy from a Western aesthetic to a Mexican one. Unlike Oedipus' tragic heroics, Cuauhtémoc's tragic essence was not born from a prophecy foretelling his killing of his father and the impregnation of his mother. The Aztec emperor is a tragic hero because even under deadly torture he continues to threaten Cortés power: "[él] no ceja un instante en la idea de defender y proteger a su pueblo a su patria. Hasta el momento final es el único peligro verdadero para el dominio de Cortés."[33] In transferring the time and space of tragedy from Greek Antiquity to the Conquest of Mexico, Usigli's also effectively displaces the original essence of its hero: Cuauhtémoc is tragic because his death was in the service of conserving his

[32] "something that no Greek tragedian foretold" (Usigli 1950, 277).
[33] "[because] never for an instant does he stop believing in the idea of defending and protecting his peoples. Until the final moment he is the only real threat to Cortés' dominion" (277).

gods from extinction at the hands of the god Cortés-Quetzalcoatl. The hero of Mexican tragedy does not fulfill divine prophecies; he rejects them because they make Indian life the subject of damnation.

Since his death is not a fall from grace but a condition of hellish existence, Cuauhtémoc's tragic essence constitutes the birth of race in the Americas. As is with the case of the Indian processions threatening Zumárraga's ontology, Cuauhtémoc's tragedy lies in a performance that subrverts Cortés' divinity.[34] He denies the god's divine nature and treats him as his equal when he defies his claim to godhood legitimized by the Aztec's prophecy of Quetzalcoatl's return. Refusing the conqueror's godhood makes him as human as the Indian, who equally makes himself just as human as the conqueror. Cuauhtémoc's humanity is performed within the matrix of coloniality of power:

> Es particularmente este héroe —Cuauhtémoc—, es particularmente este episodio de la historia del mundo: la Conquista de México; es particularmente esta mezcla de una profecía antigua con una realidad moderna —que me perdonen Atahualpa y el Perú, cuya escala es otra— lo que me mueve a pensar que en México, de todo el continente, es donde existe la posibilidad de recrear la tragedia como género… [35]

[34] This performance of resistance makes the fallen Indian the hero of 19th-century anticolonialism that Usigli does not address in his temporal scale of tragedy. For a brief discussion of Cuauhtémoc's place as a hero of anticolonialism in Mexican theatre, see Ybarra (2008).

[35] "It this hero in particular —Cuauhtémoc—, it is this episode of world history in particular: the Conquest of México; it is this particular blending of an ancient prophecy with a modern reality —[and] may Atahualpa and Perú forgive me, for their's is a

The playwright sets the Conquest of Mexico as the authentic stage for the tragedy of modernity because it was these events of conquest that established a new world order in the 16th-century. Cuauhtémoc's war with Cortés sets a record where social relations are not organized as a result of man's fight with the gods, but where a man claiming to be God can enslave another man. The emperor's humanity is conditioned through a system of power where the white man came to kill the Indian and his gods.

Mexico's exceptionality is derived from Cuauhtémoc's Aztec performative that Usigli theorizes from the place of war, and his particular experience sets the grounds for linking conquest with modernity by way of performance. The creation of the emperor's humanity in direct defiance of divinity is exceptional, since even a different experience with colonial projects in the Americas cannot satisfy Usigli's search. Atahualpa also lives in imperial Indian pasts, but the Mexican playwright apologizes to the Incan emperor because his Andean modernity belongs to a different temporal scale than the Aztecs'. Evidently, his Mexican theatre is the only dramatic tradition that legitimately derives from the tragedy of Conquest, and the only one eligible to produce an adequately tragic modernity.

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different experience— that moves me to think that in México, from the entire continent, is where the possibility of recreating tragedy as a genre exists…" (Usigli 1950, 279).

Racially Divine

I turn now to a different point in Usigli's oeuvre where we find an interpretation of the argument between Las Casas and Sepúlveda concerning the human condition of the damned, an interpretation of the trial that is more productive than the one offered by Nelson Maldonado-Torres. The philosopher's decolonial project is invested in an experience of coloniality that is intimately related to a mode of colonialism that is more recent than the one that invented the Americas. In contrast, *Corona de luz* (1963), the final installment of the *Coronas* trilogy, reenacts the debate and stages its invention of the Indian as human in the first mode of colonialism that began in the 16th-century. I argue that as a performance of the colonial underside of modernity, *Luz*'s debate theorizes the coloniality of being as a historical tragedy of Conquest and serves as a correlative to Maldonado-Torres' silence on indigeneity. Although the Valladolid trial is credited with establishing the human condition of the natives, and Sepúlveda's arguments establish the Christians' divine right to conquer, the trial's subject of address was entirely left out of the discussion in 1550 and this subject's ontological leverage has been inadequately theorized thus far. The indigenous peoples themselves were excluded from Valladolid's discussion of their bodies and souls, and henceforth lacked self-representation within any Western imagination of the

human. This disappearance of the Indians is a colonizing trick: the trial all at once hailed the Indians as possible subjects of address (*What* are they? *Can* they be human?) and endowed them with a soul (they *are* human) capable of receiving God, the same god who came to make their own gods extinguish. In reproducing the trial's question and its resulting ontology, *Luz* questions the ideology of impossible indigeneity espoused by the debate and the decolonialists' thinking through the same event. Usigli makes no direct mention of 1550 or its importance to his theory of tragedy, but he was no stranger to the archive containing the documents of 16th-century colonialism written by Las Casas, Sepúlveda and Fray Zumárraga. Indeed, as Fray Juan's epigraph reveals, the playwright draws from the bishop, the friar and the soldier to stage a moment where divinity and conquest perform an invention of the human by way of race.

Usigli's simulation of the Valladolid trial offers his audiences, particularly the Mexican ones, the materializing of a rebellious subjectivity codified as indigenous. While Carlos V, his Ministro and the Cardenal speak of the Indians and determine their future without knowing quite what they actually are, evidently leaving the Indians out of the arguments regarding their lives and level of humanity. The Spaniards decide that the question of the Indian's nature can be solved through a man-made divine apparition, but the planned miracle backfires on the Christians when the Indians are visited

by a goddess brown and indigenous like themselves. The Indians make themselves massively visible and with a loudness that challenges the masters in charge of creating divinity, and much like Cuauhtémoc's negation of the Cortés' godhood, they produce themselves as their master's human equals when they demand to be heard and seen. The Indians' procession as the play comes to an end humanizes them to the point that the Bishop relinquishes his power over them, leaving their lives to the miraculous brown goddess. Usigli establishes the human condition of indigenous peoples under conquest, and, in so doing, he provides us with an experience of the subject of coloniality that compliments the one privileged by the decolonialists.

The curtain rises in *Corona de luz* in the year 1529 with a Minister searching for Carlos V inside a monastery in Extremadura. The King, it seems, was passing off as a nobleman seeking refuge inside the monastery, without telling the Cardinal and his servants that they were in the presence of a "señor del mundo."[36] When discovered by his Ministro, the façade ends and the King finds no refuge from the world he rules over:

> CARLOS: ¿Algo nuevo bajo el sol al fin?
> MINISTRO: Señor Rey, se trata de América.
> CARLOS: ¿De qué?
> MINISTRO: De América, señor.

[36] "MINISTRO: ¿Es culpa mía si sois señor del mundo?"/ "Is it my fault that you are Lord of the World?" (Usigli *Luz* 847; further citations from *Corona de luz* will cited by page number).

CARLOS: ¿Y qué puede ser eso? ¿Qué es América? Eso no existe.

MINISTRO: Decid más bien que no existía, señor. No existía siquiera cuando fue descubierta. Pero ahora, gracias a los cosmógrafos alemanes y holandeses, vuestros súbditos, no sólo existe América, bautizada por el nombre de Américo Vespucio, sino que existen la América Septentrional y la América Meridional, en vez de lo que llamábamos el Nuevo Mundo.[37]

Carlos is hailed to at once resume his duties as *señor del mundo* and to recognize that world he does not want to name. The lack of recognition of his subjectivity and that world that calls him trivializes both as he suspends their existence: "Eso [América] no existe" and "is anything new?" His attention span with regards to his imperial duties and America's very existence reduces both to nothing. Indeed, neither one exists because he refuses to name the latter. The signifier "América" means nothing to him because such a thing does not exist, and as it does not exist, it holds no value. It means nothing to the Lord of the World because it is not part of his being, even as the Ministro comes to remind him that America beckons him, defying his negation in the process: "Decid más bien que no existía, señor."

[37] "CARLOS: Something new under the Sun, finally?
MINISTRO: My King, it's about América.
CARLOS: About what?
MINISTRO: América, my lord.
CARLOS: And what could that be? What is América? That does not exist.
MINISTRO: You mean it did not exist before, my lord. It did not exist even when it was discovered. But now, thanks to the German and Dutch cosmographers, your royal subjects, not only does América exist, baptized in Américo Vespucci's name, there exist as well a North America and South America, in place of what we used to call the New World" (847).

Contrary to his wishes to deny América's existence, the colonies come back to him double-fold: it may not have existed before, but it exists now that it has been discovered. The so-called-discovery denies any existence prior to Columbus' arrival on lands and peopless he did not know. The Ministro's denial also replaces Carlos' value of negation with a value of meaning: it was nothing before, but it is something now, and this being exists beyond the King's negation. As the Ministro's words to the King suggest, the post-discovery period created an América as a thing of linguistic value when it was given a name. It also invented America as a being of political ontology through the advancements in cosmographic technology, replacing the so-called-New World with Vespucci's American name. The post-discovery New World went from being an empty signifier without value to a political entity packed-full of meaning, and peoples are fighting over it.

In this opening scene, Usigli stages the process literally inventing a thing called by many names: América, el Nuevo Mundo, las Indias. The staging of this invention demonstrates the intricate ways in which language and conquest share the same semantic space:

> CARLOS: ¡América! Disparate. No existe más que el Nuevo Mundo, que no es más que la Nueva España, pese a ese charlatán de Vespucio a quien Dios confunda como él ha confundido la cosmografía. Me siento tentado a veces a escuchar a mis adultadores cosmógrafos y llamar a esa tierra Carolandia, Carolia o Carólica. Después de todo, es obra mía.

…

MINISTRO: … Ni hay que olvidar al ignorante Colón, que creía seguir a Marco Polo y siguió a otro polo.

CARLOS: ¿Colón? Descubrir un continente es poco: lo difícil es administrarlo. ¿Qué sería del Nuevo Continente sin mis capitanes Cortés y Pizarro y Alvarado, y sin mis justicias, adelantados y obispos?

…

CARLOS: … Me gustan los mapas, pero los verdaderos.

MINISTRO: Es igual. Ya podemos desgañitarnos hablando de la Nueva España, de las Indias Occidentales y del Nuevo Mundo, que por cierto es bastante más Viejo que éste: América es más corto, más engañoso, más vago, y por ello más susceptible de generalizarse. Quizá se hablará un día de la América española, para diferenciarla de la francesa o de la sajona, porque ni Francia ni Inglaterra van a abstenerse de efectuar exploraciones, ni a quedarse con las ganas de arrebatarnos aunque sea unas migajas de territorio y de poder en … (*Ante la mirada severa de* Carlos*, se detiene*.)

CARLOS: ¿En dónde?

MINISTRO: En … en las Indias.[38]

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[38] "CARLOS: América! How foolish. There is nothing but the New World, which is no more than New Spain, much to the charlatan Vespucci, whom God will confuse for someone else just like he has confused cosmography. I am sometimes tempted to listen to my cheating cosmographers and call this land Carlandia, Carolia or Carólica. After all, it is my creation.

…

MINISTRO: Let us not forget the ignorant Columbus, who believed he was following Marco Polo and followed a different pole [instead].

CARLOS: Columbus? Discovering a continent is hardly anything: administering it is what's difficult. What would be of the New World without my captains Cortés, Pizarro and Alvarado, and without my ministers, governors, and bishops?

…

CARLOS: … I like maps, but the truthful ones.

MINISTRO: It's the same. We could exhaust our voices talking about New Spain, of the West Indies and the New World, which, by the way, is vastly older than this one: "América" is shorter, trickier, more vague, and hence more susceptible to be generalized. Perhaps one day peoples will talk about the Spanish América, to differentiate it from the French or the English one, because neither France nor England will keep themselves from carrying out expeditions, nor will they avoid trying to steal from us even the tiniest scrap of territory and power in …. (He stops before Carlos' stern stare.)

CARLOS: In… where?

The invention of the Americas takes center stage and dismisses the significance of discovery in one sweep. What matters is not how nor what Columbus discovered, but what and how it will have to administer in order to make the discovery a thing of value. The Americas, according to Carlos V, had to be invented and then administered and controlled. America did not exist because it had not yet been brought into a language that he as supreme imperial ruler could understand, and it was impossible for him to know what it was. As owner of the world, *el mundo* was precisely what was his to name: "Me siento tentado a veces a escuchar a mis adultadores cosmógrafos y llamar a esa tierra Carolandia, Carolia o Carólica. Después de todo, *es obra mía*" (emphasis mine). The measurement of the land, and thus its containment within the language and units of measure belonging to the cosmographers, takes second place to his imperial right to name that act of measurement as his own: America is his own creation. The cosmographers legitimate America's existence by measuring its massive space, but the King takes universal ownership of its mass over anyone else. The land as geographic space can also be named a particular place by the king who owns and gives it meaning, but even he is not capable enough of controlling it directly and must send out his vassals to administer his power over that land

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MINISTRO: In… in the Indies" (848-849).

in his name. Power must be distributed among his agents and make them extensions of Carlos' own imperial legitimacy to rule the world discovered, conquered, and then invented in the process of administering it. The administration of the New World goes hand-in-hand with its invention because it takes an imperial order of governance to properly create an America as a being made to be controlled: "América es más corto, más engañoso, más vago, y por ello más susceptible de generalizarse." That nameless entity that once did not exist in Carlos' imagination is given a name that reduces the hemisphere to an act of linguistic and political creation, and then also named if it was to be controlled by Spain before it could be carved and divided into the hands of the other kings and queens in search of an empire.

Having convinced the King to recognize America —or by any other name, the same reference point—, the Ministro reveals that the reason for his seeking him out of the monastery was indeed a question of administration. Now that it has been named, how will we control it politically?

> MINISTRO: … América es el otro extremo del mundo, señor. Los informes que recibimos de las autoridades, y las cartas mismas de Cortés, no bastan a ilustrarnos. Y no sabemos hasta qué punto es possible aplicar idénticas leyes ni imponer igual conducta a los indios que a los españoles... El español mismo, una vez allá, parece sufrir un cambio, cobrar una idea excesiva de su propia

> importancia, conferirse un rango divino, y trata de reinar sobre el indio, a juzgar por los informes.[39]

If earlier Carlos declared the question over America an issue of governance and administration, the Ministro's words express the failure of a system of trickling down the monarch's power from the metropolis to the colony. The issue again becomes a question of management, but not how the monarch views it because "América es el otro extremo del mundo" and "[el] señor" still cannot understand it. What escapes Carlos' earlier logic of colonial administration was the actual exercise of power in his name by the conquistadors over the Indians. Cortés' letters to the King are enough to exhibit this critical overlook: Carlos sees his royal agents in the colony as extensions of his power, but the conquistadors have proven themselves a questionable bunch who take it upon themselves to not only interpret, but to reinvent and then carry out the King's orders in their own hands. The Ministro's words are inherently a denunciation of the King's agents as both colonial administrators and egotistical beings. The conquistador espouses "una idea excesiva de su propia importancia, conferirse un rango divino, y trata de reinar sobre el indio." Holding Cortés' letters as evidence of his

[39] "MINISTRO: … América is the other side of the world, my Lord. The reports that we receive from the authorities, and Cortés' own letters, do not tell us enough. And we do not know to what extent it is possible to apply identical laws nor impose the same conduct to the Indians as we do the Spanish… The Spaniard himself, once there, seems to suffer a change, claiming an excessive idea of its own importance, lending himself a divine rank, and tries to reign over the Indian, according to the reports" (850).

arguments, the Ministro reneges on his Majesty's logic and offers a more valid one.

> MINISTRO: Que Dios perdone, pero tengo noticias de que Cortés se siente. Adán, señor rey, y se unió a esa India, la Malinche o doña Marina, lengua y Eva de Tabasco, como para fundar un nuevo paraíso. … Pero cada soldado español, cada miembro del cabildo, cada encomendero, cada pequeño funcionario, cada comerciante, cada miembro de cada gremio, se atribuye esa situación cuasi divina —y esto es más ridículo que sacrílego, señor— con relación al esclavo indio.[40]

The Ministro's and Carlos' views on the power exercised by his agents in the colony are expressed in a language of divinity, and Cortés' actions are privileged for providing the model followed by the rest. Cortés' expeditions and conquering of Indian empires in the New World, paired with his union with a maligned Indian woman, are explained within the Bible's creation story of Adam and Eve: the reincarnation of Man's original parents, Cortés and Marina are also the original sinners come to instantiate the fall of Carlos' empire. The fall of Man as the fall of the Crown is what is being staged in

[40] "MINISTRO: May God forgive me, but I have news that Cortés feels himself to be Adam, my King, and has gotten together with that Indian woman, Malinche or Doña Marina, translator and an Eve from Tabasco, as if to begin a new paradise… But every soldier, every member of the cabildo, every encomendero, every small royal official, ever merchant, every member of every guild, attributes onto himself that quasi-divine situation —and this is more ridiculous than it is sacrilegious, my Lord— in relation to the Indian slave" (850-851).

this particular scenario of conquest, as Cortés-Adán-rey and Marina-Eva-lengua are set up to recreate a divine paradise that would rival the King's.[41]

Cortés' access to divinity through the natives' gods and Marina's linguistic abilities replicates itself in each of the King's agents, who then take on god-like qualities and take ownership of the natives and their lands. With the conquistador as example, his divine entity grants every agent the power to enslave the Indian, Marina included. Their extension of the King's dominion over the enslaved Indians becomes a thing that is god-like because their actions make them more than a mere extension of the King; they become power itself, surpassing the King in the process because it is they who directly enslave the Indian. Essentially, the Ministro is asking the King to recognize the potential problem in this, but Carlos retaliates by merely acknowledging and then endorsing the enactment of violence as a necessary thing:

> CARLOS: Ni sacrílego ni ridículo... Es natural del soldado usar la fuerza; es natural del juez usar la ley, valerse de instrumentos sin los cuales parecerían hombres como los demás y serían destruidos, a la vez que el buen gobierno,

[41] It is interesting to note that as Cortés is being recognized as conquistador-Father of Man-king, Marina is recognized as conquered-Mother of Man-translator. Unlike the story of Adam and Eve where Eve is understood as God's creation who became the original sinner because she listened to the snake and ate the forbidden apple, and thus secured their expulsion from God's paradise, Marina is not sin-ful as she did not start out from Adam's rib: she's the conquered, not part of the conqueror, and she's not his queen, she's his tool of conquest. Marina, in other words, is not Eve's equal, even as they share the same place of vilified mother, because her origin story is entrenched in slavery from the start.

> por ellos. Pero contra la violencia necesaria, contra la justica inevitable, Dios nos ha dado la bondad y la fe, que son las armas del misionero. Las armas, justamente, que, igualándolo a todos los hombres, dan el triunfo a su causa divina…
>
> ….
>
> MINISTRO: Desgraciadamente, señor, la cuestión de América no es una cuestión teológica: es una cuestión política, y afecta intereses que son vitales para España.[42]

Indeed, he suggests, it is weapons who make men equal and bring success to his divine cause. Man's divine power lies in their ability to carry out a holy war; the conquistadors' divinity lies in their very existence as extensions of the King. The Ministro insists on the political nature of the war waged against the enslaved, not on the theological ideals that Carlos uses to legitimize the violence suffered by those inhabiting the lands he has just finished naming.

It is at this moment in their argument that the Ministro's language of politics and Carlos' language of theology prove incommensurable. Regardless of their discussion of power in the metropolis and the colony, neither one has knowledge of those subjected by colonial power. The

[42] "CARLOS: Neither sacrilegious nor ridiculous… It is natural for the soldier to use force; it is natural for the judge to use the law, for them to make use of the instruments without which they would seem like ordinary men and would be destroyed, along with good governance, by them. But against the necessary violence, against the inevitable justice, God has given us kindness and faith, which are the weapons of the missionary. The weapons which, justifiably, bring triumph to his divine cause by making all men equal [in the process]…

…

MINISTRO: Unfortunately, my Lord, the question of América is not a theological question: it is a political question, and it affects interests which are vital for Spain" (851).

enslaved Indians are what is missing here, since the argument over the power relations in the colony considers the conquistadors and the King, but it does not at all address the Indians created by both politics and theology. Man and his divine right refer back to the colonial agents of the Crown who have come to conquer, save, kill and enslave the inhabitants of the New World. The terms of their argument do not signify the natives who appear merely as one more linguistic invention alongside America. Likewise, without a proper language with which to name the subject of their conquest, the natives are the absent blank slates onto which Man projects his divine right. Their absence is a reflection of what the Spaniards do not understand and so invent in the process of carrying out the politics of the conquest.

Just as the Ministro finishes his discussion of America as a political issue, not a question of divinity, the Cardinal comes on stage to remind them both that divinity and dominion come hand-in-hand when it comes to Mexico, even if the King holds no knowledge of the area and its peoples.

> CARLOS: ¿Qué es lo que os ha hecho venir, Cardenal?
> CARDENAL: La obra del demonio, señor, que continúa sin freno en México.
> CARLOS: (*Sorprendido.*) ¿Mé … xi … co?
> MINISTRO: La Nueva España, señor. Aparentemente los bárbaros naturales llaman a la cuidad capital, a más de Tenochtitlan, Méshico, o Mécsico, o Méjico, o cosa parecida.
> CARDENAL: Se me habla de incidentes sangrientos en México, en Tlacopan, en Tlaxcallan, en Tlatelolco, en

> Atzcapotzálcotl, en Cuyuacan mismo, donde Cortés ha fijado su residencia; en Teotihuacan y …
>
> CARLOS: Habría que simplificar esos nombres.
>
> CARDENAL: No he venido aquí para hablar al Rey de cuestiones de lenguaje, señor ministro. Los informes que recibo me prueban que los infelices naturales de la Nueva España se encuentran en peligro mortal, y nuestro deber cristiano es salvarlos.[43]

Mexico's origins are thoroughly indigenous here as the Spanish are unable to pronounce nor understand how Tenochtitlan becomes a completely different thing when named in the indigenous language. The linguistic violence enacted by the Spanish when they mispronounce the name and then simplify it to "cosa parecida" is accompanied by a spiritual and bloody violence suffered by the natives. The Cardinal comes not to discuss the former, but to bring news of the Devil's work and their Christian duty to save the natives from their mortal dangers. These dangers, however, become more than matters of the spirit as the Cardinal and Ministro fight it out for possession of the Indian:

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[43] "CARLOS: What brings you here, Cardenal?
CARDENAL: The Devil's work, my lord, that is unstoppable in México.
CARLOS: (Surprised.) Mé…xi…co?
MINISTRO: New Spain, my lord. Apparently the barbaric natives call the capital city something like Tenochtitlan, Méshico, o Mécsico, o Méjico, or something like that.
CARDENAL: I have been told of bloody incidents in México, in Tlacopan, in Tlaxcallan, in Tlatelolco, in Atzcapotzálcotl, in Cuyuacan itself, where Cortés has set up residence; in Teotihuacan and …
CARLOS: Those names would have to be simplified.
CARDENAL: I have not come here to speak to the King of questions of language, Sir Minister. The reports I receive prove to me that those damned natives of New Spain are in mortal danger, and our Christian duty is to save them" (851-852).

MINISTRO: Por una vez, Majestad, Su Eminencia y yo estamos de acuerdo: hay que salvar a los naturales de Nueva España… ¿Qué haríamos sin ellos? Si los indios llegaran a extinguirse…

CARDENAL: Sería una mancha imborrable la que caería sobre la cristiana Majestad de Carlos V.

MINISTRO: Eso sería lo de menos.

CARLOS: ¿Cómo?

MINISTRO: Si los indios desparecieran, ¿quién bajaría a lo profundo de las minas en busca de metales, quién acarrearía los bloques de piedra para levantar iglesias, conventos y palacios y casa habitables; quién cultivaría la tierra? No serían seguramente los españoles, que han ido a América para conquistarlo todo menos el trabajo, puesto que han ido como héroes y como aventureros. Y entonces todos nuestros proyectos para acrecer el poderío y la riqueza españoles caerían por tierra.

CARDENAL: Ya sabía yo que no podíamos estar de acuerdo. No puedo tolerar más el tono ligero con que tratáis estas cosas. Yo hablo de las almas de esos infelices y de su salud eterna.

MINISTRO: Y yo, Eminencia, hablo de sus cuerpos, y de la salud de España.

CARDENAL: ¿Y qué podréis hacer con sus cuerpos si perdéis sus almas?

MINISTRO: Sed práctico: ¿qué diantres podréis hacer con sus almas si perdéis sus cuerpos?

CARDENAL: ¡Sacrilegio! ¡Blasfemia! Sólo el alma da vida al cuerpo.

MINISTRO: Cebad las almas, Eminencia, engordadlas, y si no tienen cuerpo que habitar, no servirán más que para el paraíso, el purgatorio o el infierno, según su inclinación. Ayudad a vivir al cuerpo, y salvaréis el alma.[44]

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[44] "MINISTRO: For once, Your Majesty [Referring to the Emisario], Your Eminence and I are in agreement: the lives of the natives of New Spain must be saved… What would we do without them? If the Indians were to extinguish…

CARDENAL: It would be a permanent stain on Carlos V's Christian majesty.

MINISTRO: That would be the least.

CARLOS: How so?

MINISTRO: If the Indians were to disappear, who would go down to the deepest parts of the mines in search of metals? Who would move the blocks of stone to build churches,

Unlike the terms "América" and "México," "Indian" appears here already as a Spanish term (*Indio*). In the earlier part of the dialogue between Carlos and his Ministro, "Indio" appears as signifying something they both know exists, which suggests that the term's significance and its point of reference have already been established as common knowledge between the King and his agent. The Cardinal's entrance into their dialogue disrupts their language, however, by questioning what the word's referent and its (in)human nature: just *what* exactly is the Indian? The conversation moves from a question of phenomenology answered through language to one answered through commerce and divinity: the Indian soul and Indian body, both designed for matters of labor and both in need of imperial salvation at the hands of the King. The Cardinal's entrance disrupts the dialogue between Carlos and the

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convents and palaces and houses to live in? Who would cultivate the soil? It certainly would not be the Spanish, who have gone to América to conquer everything except manual labor because they have gone there as heroes and adventurers. And then all of our projects to increase our Spanish power and riches would tumble on land.
CARDENAL: I already knew that we could not agree. I can no longer tolerate the lighthearted tone with which you speak of these things. I am speaking of the souls of those infidels and their eternal health.
MINISTRO: And I, your Eminence, speak of their bodies, and Spain's health.
CARDENAL: And what could you do with their bodies if you lose their souls?
MINISTRO: Be practical: what could you possible do with their souls if you lose their bodies?
CARDENAL: Sacrilege! Blasphemy! Only the soul gives the body life.
MINISTRO: Feed their souls, Eminency, fatten them up, and if they do not have a body to inhabit, they will serve only for paradise, purgatory or inferno, whatever they prefer. Help the body live and you shall save its soul" (852-853).

Ministro as it brings religious matters into their discussion of the Indians, which sees them solely in terms of politics.

Religiosity makes the discourse over the Indians turn on a question of phenomenon and ontology: what is this living thing that is not yet understood and must nonetheless be saved? For the Cardinal, on the one hand, what must be saved are the souls of the damned so they may reach heaven. The Indians must be saved from extinction because their deaths and disappearance from the physical world prior to their spiritual salvation would be "a permanent stain on Carlos V's Christian majesty." Their physical bodies matter to him only insofar as their death is concerned, because the purity of his royal Christian existence would be sullied if the heathens would die prior to their cleansing. As God's representative, Carlos must come to save the infidels and purify their spirits on Earth so their souls may rest in heaven after death. For the Ministro, on the other hand, it is the bodies of the damned that are of critical importance. Without Indian bodies there would be nobody to carry out the manual labor required to build a world over the New World. Divinity, souls, spirits and heavens are of no importance to the administrator if the bodies that supposedly embody such ideas cannot produce. The natives' participation in the empire's economy not only determines their economic value in the project of building the empire, it also determines their very existence. Without their participation in

the empire's economy, the Indians have no reason to exist and would go extinct. At the same time that the Ministro states that América's problem is a political and not a theological one, he also only mentions the Indian as a sideline to his critique of the conquistadors who believe themselves gods and enslave the natives to their bidding. This makes the problem economic as much as political and theological, for the enslavement of the natives is the foundation to building the empire's riches. The Ministro is wrong: "the question regarding América is not [just] a theological issue[, nor] a political question," it is a question of Indian life and death in every sense of the word.

The argument between the Cardinal and the Ministro makes it clear that the King's dominion extends to the earthly existence as much as it does the heavenly one. Each one presents their case before their king so he can choose which one to save: the soul or the body, and their debate presents the Indian to the King as yet another entity needing to be defined. The two are speaking two different languages (spirit versus body, religion versus labor), but they are both equally trafficking in a discourse working towards the demise of indigeneity. While the former invokes divinity in order to undo their pagan ways and destroy their spiritual beliefs in the name of God, the latter defines them entirely as beasts of burden necessary to build the world anew, even if they perish in the process. The rhetoric of destruction at play in their arguments is concerned solely with what the Indians' death would

mean to the king; should the natives extinguish, the King will be at fault for their deaths and their lack of labor production will be the of end of his empire. The natives, the subjects of their discourse, remain absent and yet ever-so-present. Indians are undefined, without a proper language to understand them and without an image to attach to them outside of slavery, but still they occupy a central position in the arguments between the King and his colonial administration.

America was named after the Italian Vespucci, Mexico is a Nahuatl-derived term, and Indian is derived from Columbus's mistaking of the New World with India. While none of these three terms are particularly Spanish-derived in origin (two are Italian-derived and one taken from Nahautl), I am suggesting that in this particular play staging the invention of these three terms, *Indio* appears already as a Spanish term without a discussion of where the term actually originates. The dialogue that displays Carlos' ignorance of America and Mexico also provides an overview of how both terms were invented and demand his royal attention. The same scene incorporates the natives of the New World into the language of their colonial imaginary as a matter-of-fact process, skipping over the explanation of its incorporation. Up to this point in the play the only concrete images provided to understand what the Indian *is* are those of Doña Marina and the enslaved Indians mentioned by the Ministro. While labor, politics and commerce provide a

language with which to understand the natives, this language does not provide the terminology with which to understand what indigenous peoples are in terms of subjectivity. Thus far they are only slaves, inhuman objects made for labor (manual and otherwise) with a monetary and political value attached to them; they are not subjects fully brought into language yet (Marina is the exception). Since both agents of the King insist on the need to save the Indian if Spain is to succeed as an empire, they design a plan to convert them by making God appear to them not as a Christian, but as an Indian goddess. The first time that the Spaniards decide to give human meaning to the term originally absent in their language is through Guadalupe-Tonantzin's divine apparition. A man-made miracle incorporates the Indian into the colonizers' language, and it does so by rendering him a human being. Although *Corona de luz* stages the colonizers' silence on their invention of indigeneity, I argue that the play itself also betrays the power of language to constitute human subjectivity by centering on the performative as in fact constituting a different mode of subjectivity. The Christians' plan is carried out as they planned, but the Indians are invented as human when they gather en mass and claim the recognition of their goddess' divine apparition, not God's. When their bodies materialize and the friars recognize their humanity, their performance replaces the invention linguistic of race and stages the Indian's invention by other means.

The Cardinal and the Ministro each summon a messenger who has lived in the New World to provide direct evidence of their arguments, but what these messengers bring are news of a violent chaos that discards the debate between politics and theology:

> EMISARIO: Señor, vuestro ejército sufre en el Nuevo Mundo porque ha sido engañado, traicionado y vendido. Se nos hizo creer que iríamos como heroes empeñandos en un lucha titánica y gloriosa, y se nos convierte todos los días en violadores, en asesinos y verdugos. Se nos ha enfrentado a un enemigo que, aunque mayor en número… estaba vencido de antemano por el rayo de nuestros arcabuces y morteros…[45]

Far from the promise of a "lucha titánica y gloriosa," what the conquistadors, soldiers and explorers of the New World received upon arrival was a fantasy-turned-nightmare that made them into the "violadores, en asesinos y verdugos" of a peoples "[que] estaba vencido de antemano por el rayo de [sus] arcabuces y morteros." The agents of Carlo's war became just as he intended them to: "against the necessary violence, against the inevitable justice, God has given us kindness and faith, which are the missionary's weapons. Weapons that, justifiably, bring triumph to their divine cause by making all men equal" (851). What Carlos leaves out in his diatribe sanctioning a bloody violence in the name of a holy war are the

[45] "EMISARIO: Sir, your army suffers in the New World because it has been betrayed, defeated and lied to. We were led to believe that we would go as heroes firmly invested in a titanic and glorious battle, and instead we are made everyday into rapists, murders and executioners. We have been forced to face an enemy that, although larger in number… was defeated beforehand by the fire from our guns..." (856).

actual details and experience of carrying out a war made holy. On the ground, the soldiers carry out a destruction that is indeed religious in nature, but the details of this religious destruction act on a different notion of holiness than Carlos' un-described holy war.

> EMISARIO :…Pero los hombres de la Iglesia han derribado sus pirámides y sus templos; han abolido sus placeres, sus juegos y sus tradiciones; han apagado sus estrellas y su luna, han detenido su sol y su viento, han escampado su lluvia, han dispersado su fuego, que ellos adoraban como a dioses, y los han hecho bajar a las minas y subir a las canteras obligándolos, en castigo de su paganidad, a construir la iglesia de Cristo con el oro y la plata y el tezontle; y los han privado de su lenguaje y su comercio naturales y de sus fiestas y regocijos; les han quitado todas las armas que tenían para luchar como hombres, y los han hecho volverse contra nosotros y atacarnos con la celada y la sorpresa, que son las armas de los débiles y cobardes…[46]

Carlos only understands the physical weapons of war necessary to carry out the violence in the name of God, so his understanding of holiness is limited to the physical implications of a spiritual war. What matters is that God be worshipped, not the modes of worship and methods of making his following

[46] "EMISARIO:… But the priests have tumbled their temples, forbidden their everyday pleasures, their games and their traditions; they have turned off their stars and their moon, they have stopped their Sun and wind, they've cleared the rain, they've broken up their fire, which they adored like they did their gods, and they have made them go down to the mines and climb up to the stonemasons forcing them, as punishment for their paganism, to build the Church of Christ with the gold and silver and tezontle; and they have deprived them of their language and their natural forms of commerce and of their festivals and delights; they've taken away from them every weapon they had with which to fight as men, and have made them turn against us and attack us with treachery and surprise, which are the weapons of the weak and cowardly…" (856-857).

possible. The Emisario's testimony as a soldier of God's war illustrates a different side to his majesty's divine sentiments: on the ground they are destroying other gods and the peopless whose spirit is dependent on the divinities they are sent to eradicate. These peopless and their human spirit, dependent as they are on worshipping the Sun, the moon, the stars, fire, water and winds, are essentially in opposition to the modes of worship that Carlos and his God demand. If these demand a violent submission to their will and worshipping, the soldier ordered to bring the natives into submission expresses a complaint and an outright sadness against such a destructive method of fighting a holy war. The priests destroy the natives' gods and their spirituality, and they enslave the natives whose gods they have destroyed so they can "build the Church of Christ with gold and silver" taken from their mines. The destruction by the priests is multiple: annihilate their gods and religiosity, destroy their commerce by taking their precious minerals, and then enslave their bodies to create a new world over the one they've just destroyed. The soldier's testimony provides the details Carlos is unable to imagine, and his words illustrate the actions and effects of the war. The battle may be won, but the result is not the creation but the reduction of men. The message is clear: take away the natives' livelihood and weapons and they are no longer men, they are something else altogether.

In turn, the Cardinal's messenger, the Friar, discusses the effects of the war on the natives' livelihood as matters of spirituality:

> FRAILE: … ¿Cómo vamos a enseñar la piedad y la fe cristianas a los pobrecitos indios, si los soldados quieren convencerlos de que son héroes, como dice éste, para poder parecerlo ellos? ¿Si tus administradores quieren convencerlos de que son bestias de carga o topos en las minas? ¿Cómo persuadirlos entonces de que son hijos de Dios y hermanos nuestros? … Nosotros no queremos al indio sino la fe que salva, el Dios que es nuestro gozo y nuestra esperanza, en vez de sus ídolos y de su animal impiedad.[47]

The Fraile provides a similar testament as the Emisario's: Carlos' endorsement of weapons and bloodshed destroys the very thing that they are meant to save and convert. The Indians cannot be "taught mercy and the Christian faith," nor that "they are God's children and [their] brothers," if the King's administrators "wish to convince them that they are beasts of burden or moles in a mine." The holy war cannot be won in the terms provided by the King because his terms evade their practicality, and the messengers' practices offset what the king has told them.

Nevertheless, even as the messengers and the King are not in agreement as to how the holy war is to be carried out, they are thoroughly in

[47] "FRAILE: … How are we going to teach mercy and the Christian faith to the poor Indians if the soldiers want to convince them that they are heroes, according to this one, so that they become so? If your administrators want to convince them that they are beasts of burden or moles in a mine? How can we then persuade them into believing that they are God's children and our brothers?... We do not want to give the Indian anything but the saving faith, the God that is our joy and our hope, instead of his idols and their ungodliness" (859).

agreement as to the war's outcome: "We do not want to give the Indian anything but the saving faith, the God that is our joy and our hope, instead of his idols and their ungodliness." Their goals are the same and the Indians' gods must disappear:

> FRAILE: No hay más que un Dios, y cuando Ése llega, todos los que se dicen dioses desaparecen. Queremos que Dios llegue hasta el indio y que el indio levante la casa de Dios, para que la ame como a su obra.[48]

The appearance of "God" may bring about the disappearance of the other so-called gods, but that Fraile wants him to appear implies that God's point of arrival is unfinished in the Americas. God has not reached the Indian and without his arrival the natives have been unable to worship him or build a sacred temple in his name.

> CARDENAL: Es menester, señor, que esos infelices vean a Dios.
> EMISARIO: Eso sí—pero un dios suyo, un dios mexicano. De otro modo, jamás volverán a ser hombres.[49]

Politics and theology join in a rhetoric of visuality here: it is necessary that God appear and make himself visible to the infidels, but God must not appear as the Christian's god but as "a god of theirs, a Mexican god. Otherwise they shall never again be men." The politics of conquest by way

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[48] "FRAILE: There is only one God, and when that One arrives, all the other ones who call themselves gods will disappear. We want God to reach the Indian and that the Indian raise the house of God, so that he may love/adore him like his creation" (859).

[49] "CARDENAL: It is necessary, my lord, that those infidels see God.
EMISARIO: That is true —but a god of theirs, a Mexican god. Otherwise, they will never be men again" (860).

of spirituality/religiosity are inherently dependent on an exhibition of divine quality. God's divine essence must be made tangible through icons and idols that the Indians may recognize on their own terms. If earlier the Emisario's words spoke of the dehumanizing effects of war on the natives —call it the unmaking of men—, he is now on the side of the Cardinal and his messenger in placing an urgent call for the re-humanizing of the natives by way of exhibition. After observing the natives in their natural habitat, both the Fraile and Emisario conclude that the Indian finds himself in his true essence amidst festivals, rituals and "processions":

> FRAILE: El indio es de buena pasta: guarda las fiestas de los Reyes y de Corpus y de San Hipólito, patrono de la Nueva España, y goza en las procesiones…
> EMISARIO: Yo lo he visto en las procesiones: goza porque se viste con plumas o se disfraza de mujer y danza sus viejas danzas y se embriaga. Y los he visto dejar en las raza.[50]

The performance, in other words, define what the Indian is, and it is to the advantage of the Spanish King and his administrators to manage this mode of being if they are to succeed in fully conquering the natives. If he finds himself in his practices of religious worship, and displays his belief by leaving "the signs of his gods and his race/peoples" at their "temples and houses,"

[50] "FRAILE: The Indian is of good breed: he observes the feasts of the Three Kings and Corpus Christi and San Hipólito, patron of New Spain, and he finds pleasure in the processions…
EMISARIO: I have seen him in the processions: he is happy because he wears feathers and dresses like women and dance his old dances and he drinks. And I have seen them leave the signs of their gods and their race/peoples in the temples and houses" (860).

then his ways of worship must be manipulated if he is to build the Christian's god similar temple where God can reveal himself.

This linguistic and political creation of América is not unlike the miracle the King and his administrators wish to stage in México. Just as America must be made from nothing because it wasn't yet part of Carlos' imaginary, God must also be made to appear from nothing so the Indians would believe. While the invention of América as an extension of Spain's central power precedes the invention of Guadalupe as a critical component of Carlos' spiritual conquest, these different forms of invention are the two faces of the same coin of exchange. The Conquest here partakes in divine, gender and racial markets as it allows the King a holy right to make and unmake the world as he pleases, and he decides to create a world and a divine miracle through God painted with a brown female face.

The Spaniards decide that God's exhibition in front of the natives is necessary to save them, but this act of salvation also makes the natives' religious difference into something that did not exist before:

> ISABEL: Todos ellos tienen razón: hay que dejar que los idólatras vean a Dios. (861)
>
> …
>
> MINISTRO: … Tenéis razón: no está en nuestro poder ocultar o exhibir a Dios; pero está en nuestro deber salvar al Nuevo Mundo.[51]

[51] "ISABEL: They are all correct: we have to let those idol worshippers see God.
…

An exhibition of divinity would make the natives into humans by way of Christianity, turning them away from their pagan rituals; saving the New World from hell is the Christians' duty, they believe. What is ironic is that the (un)making of indigenous peoples into humans through a strategic pairing of vision and performance is entirely dependent on the natives' own performativity. The natives' difference from the Christians is understood through their ritualistic performances, festivals and creation of idols in honor of their gods. This performance of religiosity creates a difference that the Christians only code as pagan: they *act* unlike them, therefore they *are* unlike them.[52] If the Indians are to recognize him as a god of their performances, then Carlos and his minions decide that he must be given a body that can move and act like the Indians of the festivals.

The difference between the Christians and the natives turns on an axis of race because the Virgin must have dark skin if she is to be properly divine.

MINISTRO: … You are right: it is not in our power to hide or exhibit/display God; but it is our duty to save the New World" (862).

[52] That Christianity (Catholicism) also practice their worship through masses and other sacred rites in a similar manner does not escape the characters in the play; some of the friars in Act II highlight this commonality between them and the Indians, but only so far as to compare themselves far away from paganism and savagery because they only worship one god without human sacrifices. Christ's self-sacrifice to save humanity does not enter into their understanding of divinity and human sacrifice, but even if it did, Usigli's essay on tragedy dismisses Christ as a tragic hero because God's child is resurrected and tragic heroes do not come back to life. Christianity, he says, cannot produce tragedies like the Greeks did.

> FRAY JUAN: … ¿Qué me ordena Carlos V…? Que haga yo un milagro… Que me sustituya a Dios Nuestro Señor y que haga aparecerse a una virgen que tenga una apariencia mexicana… me ha ordenado que prepare un milagro… un falso milagro, un acto de herejía como ningún otro, un fraude contra la fe… Así, ese seglar, jardinero venido de Murcia, tiene órdenes de hacer florecer Rosales en un lugar yermo. Así, esa infeliz hermana clarisa, que oye voces y que tiene visiones y que está enferma o loca —Dios la ampare—, debe representar el papel de virgen, de una virgen mexica, morena de tez como el indio, y aparecerse en día solemne a uno de estos pobres naturales y hacerle creer que es la Madre de Dios y de indios para que se consume al fin la conquista material estas tierras y sus hombres, y quede bien establecida la superioridad del español. [53]

The fake miracle is not so much a divine act as much as it is "a fraud against the faith" reduced to a series of manipulated events: a gardener from Murcia must grow roses on barren soil and a dark-skinned nun from the Order of Saint Claire must act in the role of a Mexica Virgin. Herein lies the central

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[53] "Fray Juan" is Fray Juan de Zumárraga, whose politics outlawing native rituals is rehearsed by the Fraile and the Emisario in the previous scene. In Corona de luz, the Zumárraga that Usigli finds in the archives of Mexican colonial history takes center stage as the main protagonist of a play about tragic modernity.

Translation: "FRAY JUAN: What does Carlos V order me to do…? That I make a miracle. That I substitute God, Our Lord, and that I make a Virgin appear with a Mexican appearance… he has ordered me to prepare a miracle… a false miracle, an act of heresy like no other, a fraud against the faith… As such, that layman, that gardener from Murcia, has orders to make beds of roses grow on barren soil. And as such, that unfortunate sister from the Order of Saint Claire, who hears voices and has visions and is ill or crazy — God help her—, must play the role of a Virgin, a Mexica Virgin, with dark skin like the Indian, and make herself appear on a solemn day to one of those poor natives make him believe that she is the Mother of God and the Indians so that the conquest of these lands and its peoples may be finalized, and that the Spaniard's superiority be well established" (877-879.

point of the King's ordered miracle: the Virgin must be "dark-skinned like the Indian and make herself appear … to one of these poor natives and make him believe that she is the Mother of God and the Indians so that the conquest of these lands and its peoples may be finalized." On the one hand, the miracle makes a gardener the creator or natural life where such should not exist, and it endows a mad woman with divine attributes –she is now a Virgin Goddess in both the Christian and Mexica sense. On the other hand, the miracle codes the nature of the Indians in terms of a religiosity gone brown like the color of their skin. Whereas earlier the Christians in Spain could not understand the phenomenon of the Indians because they did not exist in their language, the miracle solves the problem by inventing the Indian's dark skin as a signifier of humanity. Most importantly, the miracle's creation of humans is a political project because the brown virgin must appear so that the Conquest will establish the Spaniards' human superiority. The miracle does not measure the lives of the natives based on codes of religious difference, but it measures their human essence based on a notion of ontology where the color of their bodies places them as the Spaniards' inferiors. This human scale shifts the ordering of the social world from a relationality between Christians and barbarians to a relationality between human and homunculi of a different skin color. It is at this moment in the

first mode of colonialism that race is brought into language, and through a brown female body that is racially divine.

The apparition of the brown Virgin ends up up-staging the Christian miracle. While they intend on making an Indian goddess appear to one Indian, news of an apparition of different sorts spread throughout the empire and the natives turn up at the monastery's doors en mass. Historically the Virgin is said to have appeared to one Indian man (Juan Diego) in the hills of Tepeyac, and she orders him to go and tell the bishop of New Spain to build a temple in her honor. In *Corona de luz*, the figure of this witnessing Indian comes on stage divided into four: Juan I, Juan II, Juan III ("Juan Felipe"), and Juan IV ("Juan Darío"), and each one provides a different side of the story of her divine appearance. One by one the four incarnations of Juan Diego appear before Fray Juan to give an account of the apparition of a brown goddess surrounded by a bed full of roses. Although the friar dismisses each of their stories as effects of their lack of rationality —these only have visions but cannot produce actual knowledge—, the repetition of the details by the four Indian men end up producing the same apparition he was ordered to stage. When Juan Felipe brings Tata Obispo the "xóchitl que hace sangre,"[54] the thorny flower throws the Father Bishop into a confused frenzy at the sight of the Indian's

[54] "Father Bishop… a flower that bleeds" (901).

possession of a rose that did not grow in Tenochtitlan. The production of the rose in the hands of an irrational Indian questions the friar's dismissal supposedly based on rationality. Succinctly, Fray Juan admits to having ordered a Spanish gardener to plant roses

> en un lugar yermo, hacia el sur, que nombramos el pedregal de San Ángel —donde hace quizá siglos las fuerzas naturals de un volcán, movidas por los divinos designios, destruyeron la vida de incontables infieles… Y donde la piedra volcánica hace superflua toda posibilidad de siembra. Pero el jardinero se comprometió a lograrlo. Bien. Tengo aquí una minuta precisa y clara (*La exhibe.*) —y en esta otra mano, Toribio de Benavente, tengo una rosa cortada hacia el norte, del lado del Tepeyáctl. ¿Qué puedo pensar?[55]

Nothing can grow on volcanic rock, and yet Fray Juan now holds in his hands a rose grown where it was not planted. The rose appeared when it wasn't supposed to be possible: it grew in Tepeyáctl, where it wasn't planted, and it did not grow on volcanic rock precisely because it wasn't designed to. The rose appeared by exquisite design to defy the planned reality of the events. Since its originally planned soil was a region where a volcanic eruption had centuries before ended the lives of "countless infidels," the rose defies reality and redeems the lives of those countless souls lost to the

[55] "in a barren wasteland, towards the south, that we named the San Angel's Sacred Ground —where, perhaps centuries ago, a volcano's natural forces, moved by divine orders, destroyed the lives of countless infidels… And where the volcanic rock makes it impossible for anything to grow there. But the gardener promised to make it possible. Now, fine, I have here a precise and clear proof (He exhibits it [the rose]) —and in my other hand, Toribio de Benavente, I have a rose cut from the northern region next to the Tepeyáctl hills. What can I think now?" (902).

volcano. The birth of the rose breathes life back into these infidels by defying the Christian's faith and re-centering the infidels outside of their man-made divine creation.

Besides himself and without reason, the friar summons the gardener ordered to make possible the impossible bed of roses grow on a volcanic rock. Although he first says that he did as he was told, he also admits to having planted roses in a different place that was far away from Tepeyáctl.

> ALONSO: (*Derrotado*.) Muy bien entonces, Ilustrísima. Soy hombre —soy criatura de Dios y del diablo. Sirvo altars y tengo apetitos. Mis apetitos me llevaron hasta un doncella India que habita más allá del Tepeyácatl, a dos leguas quizás. Una India que cree aún que los españoles somos como dioses, y que me pidió un a modo de milagro para entregarse. En la puerta de su jacal sembré un rosal muy pequeño que floreció al mismo tiempo que florecía su vientre[56]

The sowing of a "flower that bleeds" in an infertile native land produces an inverse parallel in the native woman's body impregnated by the same hand planting the rose. What's more, beyond this story of sexual conquest-cum-sinful story, this Indian woman producing the illegitimate mestizos taunts the Indian goddess: unlike the brown Virgin, this woman embodies entirely the opposite of virginity since she not only had sex with the conqueror, she

[56] "ALONSO: (Defeated.) Very well, your Illustriousness. I am a man —I am God's creature and the Devil's. I serve in altars and I have appetites. My appetites took me to a virgin Indian woman who lives beyond the Tepeyáctl, perhaps to leagues from there. An Indian woman who still believes that we Spaniards are like gods, and who asked me for a miracle if she was to give herself over me. In front of her hut I planted a very small rose bush that bloomed at the same time as her womb grew" (905).

has produced him a child. Her story is all too reminiscent of Malintzin's relationship to Cortés, because just as Cortés played at being god and Malintzin as the symbolic mother of the first mestizo, this Indian woman's treatment of the Spaniard as a god recalls the arrival of the conquistador who destroyed the Aztec empire. Malintzin and this nameless woman also partake in relationships with gods even as they question their divinity; this Indian woman demanded a miracle to validate his divine condition and Malintzin is credited with having helped Cortés maintain his god-like image in *Corona de fuego*. Both Malintzin and Alonso's lover become the anti-thesis to the Virgin Mary because their production of mestizo children through the hands of gods trivializes the nature of Mary's sex-less impregnation by God. Divine intervention plays a part in each of these women's lives, and in *Corona de luz*, divinity and Indian women go hand-in-hand even as the three never set foot on the same stage.[57]

The visions of a brown goddess covered in light and the bed of roses growing on Tepeyac follow these four Indian men and also reach beyond Tenochtitlan:

> ALFÉREZ: El Capitán General sabe todo lo que ocurre en sus dominios. Llegó a sus oídos muy temprano esta mañana que ocurren cosas en Tenochtitlan. Nubes de indios, que es como decir de moscas inficionantes, han rodeado su

[57] Usigli does not include a single female indigenous character in Corona de luz. The only female character to come on stage is the Spanish nun set to play the Virgen.

palacio para hablarle de qué sé yo qué cuento o fibula de una mujer que se aparece ante los naturales para sacar más diezmos para la Iglesia.

…

MARTINCILLO: Id al balcón, señor Obispo. Ved esa formación de indios allá abajo, que es cosa nunca vista, y si lo italianos y los franceses y los andaluces la vieran pensarían que es cosa de procession o de tumulto y holgaran de verla.[58]

Cortés himself, "el Capitán General," has been surrounded by "clouds of Indians, which is the same as saying infectious flies," and they are speaking of "some story or fable of a woman who appears before the natives to ask for more money for the Church." Guadalupe's request to have a temple built in her honor sends the Indians in search of answers from the conquistador, but he sees them as a swarm of poisonous threats. Likewise, the Bishop must witness the natives' gathering as "a thing never seen before," and possibly "a procession or commotion" of some sort. *Luz*'s concluding scene reveals that Guadalupe's story and the plans for the apparition have spread far and wide, culminating in a massive gathering of Indians outside Fray Juan's monastery and Cortés' quarters. The experience of the apparition and

[58] "ALFÉREZ: The General knows everything that happens in his dominion. News of things happening in Tenochtitlan reached his ears early this morning. Clouds of Indians, which is the same as saying infectious flies, have surrounded his palace to speak to him of I don't know what story or fable of a woman who appears before the natives to ask for more money for the Church (911).

…

MARTINCILLO: Go to the balcony, Sir Bishop. Watch that formation of Indians down below, which is a thing never seen before, and if the Italians and the French and the Andalucians would see it they would think that it is some thing like a procession or commotion and they would be stunned by it" (913).

the knowledge associated with Guadalupe-Tonantzin are now thoroughly a communal experience (still) among men. Unlike the stories of Juan Diego dismissed by Fray Juan, the massive presence of the Indians surrounding the Spaniards presents a danger that they cannot escape. The natives demand an answer: the miracle has happened, Guadalupe has spoken and a temple must be built. Their massive presence is disturbing and threatens the wellbeing of the Bishop and Cortés, who must address the Goddess' request even if they did not account for her in the original plans for the miracle:

> *Fray Juan abre el balcón. El tumultuo crece abajo sin que sea posible distinguir lo que dicen las voces en nahoa. Poco a poco se precisa, repetida en ascenso, la palabra* Tlamahuizolli.[59]

The details of the apparition spread and grow, coalescing into a presence that is different from the one originally planned by the friars. Guadalupe has appeared to the Indians as they planned, and in the process invented the Indian who find himself to be among religious rites. Still, the massive presence clamoring "miracle" is none of the above. The natives voices clamoring repeatedly in Nahautl cannot be differentiated, they cannot be narrowed down to a single entity that can then be understood by Cortés or the Bishop. As an individual idea or voice the Indian can be understood, either as Juan Diego, one of his four reincarnations, or a generalized Indian

[59] Fray Juan goes to the balcony. The commotion rises below, making it impossible to distinguish what the voices are speaking in Nahuatl. Little by little it becomes clear, increasingly repeated, the word Tlamahuizolli (916).

of the processions and idols, but as a massive commotion the natives are ungeneralizable because they can't be "distinguish[ed]" as individuals. This is perhaps the threat to the Spaniards: the miracle produced what they cannot contain, and outside the bounds of a staged divinity, the Indian appears in excess. The communal makes itself present on their own, even as the Virgin told them to ask for a temple of worship, because it is they who make their way towards the center of power and make their voices be heard.

After hearing the King's orders, Sahagún, the 16th-century Franciscan friar and ethnographer of Aztec culture, explodes at the thought of his God being made an Indian female goddess.

> SAHAGÚN: No es posible. ¡Una Tonantzin, ay! El retroceso de la historia.[60]

Sahagún's retort suggests that to bring Tonantzin as part of the miracle would run against its purpose to evangelize the Indians. In his logic, if the Christians wish to bring them into God's faith, they must not "move back" towards their pagan deities. The friar's words assume history as a forward-moving progress, one that must be inherently Spanish/Western-based in order to continue moving forward. If it were to be imagined with an Indian face, it would no longer be history because, for Sahagún, the staging of History via Tonantzin would make it stop and move backwards. Tonantzin

[60] "SAHAGÚN: It is not possible. A Tonantzin! The reversal of history" (879).

is the key to rearticulating Sahagún's imagination of history because her indigenous essence makes evident the colonial nature of History. A history with an indigenous face places indigeneity as an active participant in the making of the world, and leads history to question the inherent move towards a futurity of progress and look elsewhere instead. The move to see indigenous goddesses with their faces painted in the image of a Christian God as anti-historical or anti-progressive, as Sahagún does, leaves the indigenous unable to progress with History proper. Sahagún's language fails to grasp the possibilities of indigeneity's production and active participation in this same history progressing towards the future, not the past. The famous friar ignores that Tonantzin exists in the same temporal location as his own, albeit the indigenous peoples experience her temporality in a different manner than Sahagún's own. *Luz* stages the miracle of race and Tonantzin makes her appearance before the Indians, very much against Sahagún's tainted history.

Sahagún's retort recalls Maldonado-Torres' use of the *damné*:

> Following Fanon, I will use a concept that refers to the colonial subject, equivalent in some way to Dasein but marking the aspects of the coloniality of Being: the *damné* or condemned of the earth. The *damné* is for the coloniality of Being what Dasein is for fundamental ontology, but, as it were, in reverse. The *Damné* is for European Dasein the being who is 'not there.' (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 253).

Maldonado-Torres' coloniality of being uses the existential of the *damné* to theorize modernity's ontology in reverse, so to think of the being who is "not there" is also a similar turn to "move backwards." By considering the coloniality of Being as a correlative to the philosophical tradition following Descartes and Heidegger, his coloniality of Being argues against the exclusion of the colonized from ontology and introduces ethics and love to bring an end to damnation. The radicality of his decolonial ontology is that it can propel philosophy forward to produce coloniality as *not* excluded from philosophy's modernity proper. In his decolonial future of modernity, the trans-modern world is made without the non-ethics of war that invented coloniality in the first place. A decolonial future, in other words, is designed to bring an end to the *damné*'s life in hell and lead to a time without coloniality. Maldonado-Torres's ontology makes modernity from the margins, but his alternative to damnation (Fanon's Love) returns subaltern ontology to the center of a modernity where subalternity would no longer exist. While this is indeed a libratory project, it also erases the difference between a History of the human originating *within* modernity and an alternative history of humanity existing *beside* Western modernity. He theorizes from the ontological exclusion of the colonized, but he does not theorize time and ontology from an experience of the *damné* that could also exist as alternatively modern from that which originally excluded it. His

decolonial option does not make it possible to create a future world where coloniality and modernity exist besides each other in alterity; they can only exist as part of a universal history of the future. An ontology of the *damné* beside modernity and Tonantzin's divine apparition, I suggest, are operating on a similar mode of existentialism. Tonantzin would stage Sahagún's linear history in a different order by displacing the Christians' God from the center of the post-1492 world. The indigeneity created by a Christian god painted brown and female is a massive clamoring that speaks directly to the friars, and demands to be acknowledged in their alterity. In turn, the Christians are forced to recognize that the result of their miracle is embodied in the Indians outside the monastery. Their act of recognition produces the Indians as humans through a brown goddess coming back from the past, so the Christians' move backwards does not undo a linear progressive history as much as it makes a present tied to the past.[61] After all, the miracle does not result in the writing of history from the front to the back, but in an imagination of history with indigeneity as an active participant in the

[61] Since *Luz* takes place at the height of conversion projects that pushed the Indians away from their deities, Sahagún's words assume that these gods are of a thing of the past. Their deities no longer exist in the present because his God came to came to mark the beginning of a future where the time of the gods is no more. The time of the gods belongs to a past before the time of History, which began in the New World with the Requerimiento's love/hate speech act and its war of spiritual conquests. For Sahagún, God's going Indian would bind the time of the gods past with the time of History present. For discussions of time and conquest, see Rabasa (2000, 2005), Maldonado-Torres (2006) and Mignolo (2009, 2012).

present's future. The Indians' performative ontology propels indigeneity forward into conversion —the modernity of Sahagún's History—, and into Usigli's present and the future of race itself —coloniality. Guadalupe-Tonantzin creates an ideology of the human within the terrain of colonialism, and while this world is governed by Sahagún's wars of spiritual conquest, indigenous ontology performs a livelihood that exceeds the logic of the conquerors. They invent a future world from an ontological colonial difference that does not bring an end to damnation, but nor does it leave it in tact. The last word is theirs: "Tlamahuizolli," and the last word is in Nahuatl, not in Spanish.

Performance Anxiety, Performance Ontology

Rodolfo Usigli's implicit theorizing of what I have called the "Aztec performative" is exemplified in his privileging of an ahistorical Indian imperial grandeur, in his misrecognition of indigenous peoples's experience with colonialism and México's eternity, and in his staging of an indigeneity within the colonial matrix of power. While I doubt that the Mexican playwright consciously staged the Indians acting out of bounds as a radical project addressing the coloniality of being, I argue that *Corona de luz* provides a framework with which to theorize a subject of the coloniality of being that neither Usigli or Nelson Maldonado-Torres fully understand. On the one

hand, the playwright ignores indigeneity in his present as something other than a colonizer's citation of a rebellious performance from centuries before, but his misrecognition is to a certain extent redeemed when his play stages the creation of a new being born within colonialism. For his part, the philosopher fails to account for the creation of this being as something more than a site of the birth of the coloniality of power and does not see the indigenous being as a subject parallel to Frantz Fanon's. Both offer few productive spaces for indigenous peoples to exist as agentic subjects of modernity/coloniality, and the ideologies of indigeneity they espouse turn on an axis of impossibility. Usigli theorizes indigenous performativity solely for the sake of linking a Mexican eternity with an ancient past alive in the present *as* past, and Maldonado-Torres displaces the Sepúlveda-Las Casas argument as originating a subject of the coloniality of being because he sees Fanon's *damné* and *damnation* as providing it. The ideology of indigeneity transgressing both their projects has an impossible subject in mind: in their ideas of modernity/coloniality, indigenous peoples are always-already not producers of the present.

The last scene in *Corona de luz* offers us a moment where their impossible Indians lead a resistance to impossibility. Usigli's citation from Fray Juan de Zumárraga's colonial archive surfaces in *Luz* when the friars design plans for a divine apparition based on the Indian processions. His

archive cites their performance as rebellious and pagan, providing enough evidence for the playwright to claim the Indians as essentially tragic and to write a play where these behave according to the friar's observation. However, since the archive cited by Usigli makes no mention of the Indians speaking to the friar, the brown bodies the play's manuscript leap from the friar's notes to address him directly produce a racialized subject that he was unable to comprehend in his notes. *Luz*'s Indian bodies, I would argue, exhibit a cultural politics that indigenous peoples performed under Zumárraga's gaze, and a cultural politics escapes the logic of the archive (almost) completely.

The goddess that embodies divinity, gender and race, gives way to an apparition that threatens rather than silently accept imposed conversion. The mass of Indians in excessive motion causes disrupts the order of everyday life in New Spain, and in this commotion indigeneity makes itself present in terms that the natives' own. The clamoring of "*tlamahuizolli*" vocalizes the Indian in a different performance that cannot be registered by the one staged by their colonizers. While the latter wish to reduce the natives' being not to language but to rituals of worship by deciding to stage divinity to contain their difference by way of religion, the Indians end up acting-being outside the bounds of a staged miracle when the performance of divinity happens.

The Indians outside the monastery move with the purpose to demand recognition beyond colonial voyeurism.

> MOTOLINÍA: … Gritan, Fray Juan, *tlamahuizolli*, esto es, hecho sorprendente o suceso maravilloso. (*Fray Juan retrocede y se aparta del balcón llevándose las dos manos a la frente. La luz aumenta.*) ¿Qué os ocurre, Fray Juan?
> FRAY JUAN: (*Después de agitar las manos un instante.*) … ahora lo veo todo como si mi cabeza se hubiera abierto en dos para dejar pasar la luz, Benavente.[62]

At the sound of the Indians' loudness and the sight of their massive numbers, Fray Juan growing anxiety literally splits his head in two. The anxiety caused by the performance forces him to deny the miracle's creation as either staged (by the Spaniards) or fantasy (the Indian witnesses have no reason): the divinely racial apparition *was* real. The miracle is legitimized not by the theatrical or the imaginative, but by a loud presence challenging its conqueror to listen to its "growing light." The absent subject of Carlos' debate with the Cardinal and the Ministro materializes in this scene to displace their dialogue as constituting their existence. Indigenous peoples produce themselves in direct opposition to the Crown's denial of their existence as human beings, and against its reduction of their humanity to a discourse of souls and bodies in need of salvation. In contrast to the 16th-

[62] "MOTOLINÍA: … They are screaming, Fray Juan, tlamahuizolli, this is, an amazing act or marvelous event. (Fray Juan moves away from the balcony, raising both hands to his forehead. The light increases.)
FRAY JUAN (After waving his hands for an instant.) … I now see everything as if my head had been split in two to let the light shine through, Benavente" (916).

century religious processions observed by Zumárraga where their bodies were policed by the colonial order, their bodies in *Luz* act out in a religious procession that is much more productive. Rather than serving as a cite of subversion, the Indians' performance produces a site of humanity. The brown goddess has come to claim the natives as her progeny and they are not the Indian damned to perish under the guise of Christianity. On the contrary, "the Mother of God[,] the Mother of Humanity" propels them to claim their existence. The visions of "clouds of Indians" and "infectious flies" are an observation from a colonial gaze sensing a threat made tangible. Employing the divine apparition, the indigenous materialize outside the monastery to make their bodies be seen by the colonial gaze like it had never before seen them. Neither souls nor bodies in need of salvation, the Indian presence is now something completely new from what Carlos, the Cardinal, the friars, the soldiers, and Cortés himself believed it as. Their presence creates a new being when they understand their lives born not from God but from a goddess gone brown like the color of their own skin, a racially divine apparition producing them as beings within and besides the colonial order's limited imagination of history. This performance of excess *is* indigeneity.

Outside of his colonial reason, the Indians' performance of indigeneity drive Fray Juan mad and lead him to recognize the procession as something altogether new from before.

> FRAY JUAN: No diremos nada, Benavente. Dejaremos que la orgullosa corona española piense que todo pasó como ella lo había dispuesto. Dejaremos que España crea que inventó el milagro… Hay que ocultar la verdad a Carlos y a todos, hermano, porque a partir de este momento México deja de pertenecer a España. Para siempre. Y eso es un milagro de Dios.[63]

The presence seen from the balcony materializes the fabrication of a Christian miracle and the truthfulness of a miracle of a brown goddess. The racial character of the apparition denounces the Christian intent on falsifying divinity for the sake of a one-sided conversion, and the visuality of Guadalupe-Tonantzin displays the hybrid nature of the relationship between conqueror and conquered. Instead of lending credit to the Spanish Crown's purpose, the apparition turns the fabricated miracle against its original intent and reveals that God did not appear by choice. Guadalupe-Tonantzin's miraculous visions lead to the creation of the indigenous as peoples with agency, and the rebellious performance makes the miracle through their own hands. This exercise of native agency outstands the friar's reason to the point that he disowns it altogether: the indigenous presence "no longer belongs to Spain" because its existence changes things forever.

[63] "FRAY JUAN: We will not say anything, Benavente. We will let the arrogant Spanish crown that everything passed as it had ordered. We will let Spain believe it invented the miracle… We must hide the truth from Carlos and from everyone, brother, because as of this moment México no longer belongs to Spain. Forever. And that is a miracle of God" (916).

Fray Juan's words as the curtain drops on *Corona de luz* renounce his place of privilege cited by Usigli's treatise on tragedy a decade earlier, but his reformed colonial gaze still paves the road towards an authentically Mexican theatre. The presence outside his monastery exhibits indigeneity in indigenous terms, but in a very Mexican moment:

> *Crece el tumulto de voces. Una luz cenital parece echar abajo las paredes e inundarlo todo. Juan IV, pausadamente, tiene un movimiento como para volverse al público y mostrar su tilma. Algo lo detiene y como bañado por un pueril diluvio de bienestar, se dirige al balcón donde Fray Juan se prepara a bendecir al pueblo.*
>
> FRAY JUAN: (*A Motolinía.*) Veo de pronto a este pueblo coronado de luz, de fe. Veo que la fe corre ya por todo México como un río sin riberas. Ése es el milagro, hermano.[64]

Mexico enters into the space of the theatre through the tragedy of Conquest and the performative produced under its guise. The growing crowd of voices disturbs Fray Juan to the point of denouncing his reign over the Indians' souls because the divinity they witnessed was not the one he planned for. Their utterance of faith may be an allegiance to a goddess that is not his God, but their belief in divinity nevertheless legitimates the natives' humanity in the process. The native bodies are made indistinguishable from

[64] "The crowd of voices grows. A zenith light seems to tumble the walls and flood everything. Slowly and deliberately, Juan IV moves as if to turn to the audience and display his tilma/cape. Something stops him and as if taken over by a naïve sense of happiness, he turns towards the balcony where Fray Juan is preparing himself to bless the peoples.
FRAY JUAN: (To Motolinía.) I suddenly see this place crowned in light, in faith. I see that faith runs through all of México like an endless river. That is the miracle, brother" (917).

each other in the procession and allow the friar to imagine them as the embodiment of a Mexican nation. Just like the communal experience of Guadalupe's apparition consolidated the humanity of the Indians in the eyes of the Christians, the Indians appearing in mass lead to an imagined community in the eyes of the friar. The friar understands the natives' faith as proof of a México independent from Spain, an entity that did not exist prior to the procession.

Much like Cuauhtémoc's resistance to his master's godhood, the performative ontology of *Luz*'s Indians is a heroics of tragedy, because it supercedes God's plan to kill their own gods. The Indians' spiritual conquerors and genocidal masters simply cannot see them as willing converts because they are not the silent and solemn subjects they originally thought them to be. When the friars see the results of a miracle they did not stage, they recognize the Indians' call as a miracle of alterity and their humanity as created not by their white God, but by a brown goddess. Even though these massive Indians do not posses Cuauhtémoc's imperial subjectivity, they too fight the same war fought by the playwright's authentically tragic hero. Usigli's Mexican nationalism cannot escape the tragedy of modernity because he theorizes and creates a theatre vis-à-vis an indigenous ontology originally performed in the terrain of conquest. He

himself was the tragic Mexican he felt his country's theatre needed to be adequately modern.

CHAPTER 2

AGAINST KNOWLEDGE:
MAYAN GODS AND THE COLONIAL RESIDUE OF ME(X)ICANA THEATRE

I will tell you how hungry my body is to know something beyond the colony.
— Cherríe Moraga, *An Irrevocable Promise: Staging the Story Xicana*

DAYKEEPER: This is the root de la palabra anciana, in a place named Quiché. Es la raíz de un pueblo of earth and sky that we shall plant here in the hearts of its descendants. This is the story of how light was born from darkness y la luz shadowed again by the hands of the gods. We shall tell our cuento en voz alta for there is no place to read it… Five hundred years ago, the bearded ones arrived in floating palacios, in search of the sun's golden secretions. They came armed with flechas of melded steel and a black book decrying their devil. Today our children know fewer and fewer Indian prayers; they put on the Ladino cloth of soldier and seller. And our book and its author keep their faces hidden.
— Cherríe Moraga, *Heart of Earth: A Popol Vuh Story*

PILMAMA: ¡Ay, pronto llegarán hombres del más allá del mar fabricados del más duro metal, sin corazón ni escrúpulos… y de todo esto harán campo de ruinas de polvo, sin pasado ni ayer. ¡Ay pobrecitos pueblos míos de Rabinal, los de Ux y Pocoman! Seremos aventados al horizonte, como flore de un árbol que tumbó el huracán del tiempo. La vida es un instante prestado por los dioses. Lo demás es el tiempo.[1]
— Sergio Magaña, *Los Enemigos*

**All translations included in this chapter are my own unless otherwise noted.*

[1] Sergio Magaña, *Los Enemigos*. Mexico, DF: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, S.A., 1990.
* *Translation*: "PILMAMA: Oh, men will soon be arriving from beyond the sea, men made of the heaviest metal, heartless and unscrupulous… and from all that surrounds us they will make a camp of ruins and dust, without a past and without a yesterday. Oh, my poor peoples of Rabinal, of Ux and Pocoman! We will be thrown to the horizon, like the leaves of a tree knocked down by the hurricane of time. Life is but a moment lent to us by the gods. The rest is time itself" (90).

¿Tenemos, como Shakespeare, héroes de tragedia sin posibilidad de una tragedia constituida, o tenemos, como Sófocles, tragedia y héroe fundidos en la fuerza, en la sangre, en el terror, en la destrucción, en el horror y la piedad? … Como los griegos, tenemos un gran pasado de sufrimiento y de tortura que se ha limitado a transformarse y que, transformado, es siempre nuestro presente.[2]
— Rodolfo Usigli, *Primer ensayo hacia una tragedia mexicana*

What is most provocative about Rodolfo Usigli's insistence that Mexico is the rightful inheritor of the Ancient Greeks' tragedic tradition is not his dismissal of William Shakespeare and Jean Racine, but rather his claims to an erotics of dramatic creation born from "the strength, blood, terror, destruction, horror, and piety" lived by the Americas well before the Renaissance could lay claim to the likes of Sophocles. As agents of the Renaissance ideals of modernity, Shakespeare and Racine limit themselves to reproducing the content and the form of Greek tragedy and its heroes, but never tragedy itself. These two tragedians missed the very reality and essence of the tragedy occurring in their own time: the horrifying experiences of a colonial terror that destroyed indigenous worlds, spilled the blood of

[2] Rodolfo Usigli, "Primer ensayo hacia una tragedia mexicana (1950)" in Rodolfo Usigli, *Teatro completo*, Vol. 5, Ed. Luis de Tavira and Alejandro Usigli. Mexico City: Fondo de cultura económica, 2005.
* *Translation*: "Do we have, as Shakespeare does, tragic heroes without the possibility of a fully-formed tragedy, or do we have, like Sophocles, tragedy and tragic hero founded on strength, blood, terror, destruction, horror and piety?... Like the Greeks, we have a great past of suffering and torture that has limited itself to transforming [itself] and that, once transformed, is always our present" (275-276).

countless native peoples, and made our bodies the stuff of disposable life.[3] Theirs was an act of mimicry "without the possibility of a [truly] constituted tragedy," he says. In short, only in the invention of the Americas and with the subjects damned by the Conquest can tragedy "transform itself" from the time of the ancients to "always [be] our present." Colonial terror circumscribes the space of tragedy to the Americas, and Usigli insists that our modern time is still of tragic proportions without salvation from a life marked by terror. His is the culture of colonial modernity at its worst: damnation.

My first chapter argues that the playwright's theorization of tragedy by way of indigenous performativity also hinges on its own tragic flaw. By not lending credence to native peoples' ability to perform in their living present, Usigli actively relegates the lives of the Indians in 1950 to the stuff of archival citations or the remnants of an imperial time making up his Aztec performative. The indigeneity of his Mexican theatre belongs in the time of precolonial pasts instead of Indian presents, and the only subjects legitimately endowed with his ideal of performativity are the non-indigenous

[3] Throughout "Primer ensayo hacia una tragedia mexicana" (1950), Usigli always speaks to his intended Mexican audience in the communal "we" the nation, and "our" history past and present. There are also moments where he speaks about all Mexicans, regardless of race and ethnicity, as the contemporary survivors of colonial terror and as native peoples, even as he holds himself forever distant from indigenous people living in his time.

Mexicans whose past experiences of Conquest can be mediated through Western theatre. Furthermore, he does not account for the ways in which his knowledge of indigenous peoples derives from an ethnographic gaze and archeological search studying them from the margins of both time and theatre. He reads the 16th-century notes of the colonial voyeur citing the Indians' religious performance, and then reproduces Fray Zumárraga's ethnographic gaze by theorizing and staging this brand of performativity four centuries later. In both his and Fray Zumárraga's scenarios of conquest, the observer and the scholar of indigenous performativity hold themselves physically and ontologically distant from the Indians. These, in turn, are written into the manuscript of a set of plays and an essay staging their performance. The playwright's turn to the archive theorizes and performs race in the 20th-century, and produces his oeuvre within the coloniality of power. In recovering the natives as a thing of the past, however, Usigli's coloniality also enunciates the Indians as always-already dead in Mexico's present. Since the Indians cannot perform themselves beyond the colonial archive and the manuscripts of his *Coronas*, the coloniality of his Mexican theatre reveals that colonialism still frames the relational field of race.

Decolonial arguments differentiate between systems governed by formal colonial relations (colonialism), on the one hand, and the patterns of

power set in place after colonialism's end (coloniality), on the other.[4] Contrary to these, Usigli's engagement with race and Conquest reveals a more intricate temporal relationship between both systems. The Conquest of Mexico ended so that he could write and theorize tragedy in the postcolonial period that followed, but his treatment of the Indians via his forms of art is clear evidence that the end of colonialism did not mean freedom from colonial relations for indigenous peoples living under Mexico's postcolony. His turn towards tragedy assumes that colonialism had a definite end prior to his postcolonial present, but makes no mention of the anticolonial transition that marked the end of former and the beginning of the latter. Combined with his overlooking of the indigenous, I suggest that Usigli's blind spot with respect to anticolonialism has as much to do with race as it does with time. His work bears the mark of a past Conquest because he wrote and produced his theatre in the terrain of the postcolony, but this brand of coloniality sees contemporary indigenous peoples' experiences with colonialism solely as a thing of the past and unproductive in his present. Usigli effectively denies these peoples a coeval existence with his own time when he excises them from the stage. It is because of this performative and ideological move that the playwright's relationship to indigeneity is a residual

[4] See my introductory chapter for a discussion of this differentiation.

form of the 16th-century mode of colonialism: his tragedy framed by the Conquest in actuality colonizes Indians in the 20th-century. As a result, this colonial residue produces an incongruence between the present time of Indian peoples and Mexican theatre's time of race. For the playwright, the Indians are alive in the past because the archive says they could perform, and they can therefore only live prior to and during the Conquest. For the Indians living in the 20th-century, these ideologies of race and time are incongruent with their own reality.

The logic of this second chapter follows my first one by tracing the colonial residue of Usigli's dramatic tradition in the theatre of Cherríe Moraga and Sergio Magaña. In their attempts to understand the effects of the Conquest on the 20th-century's present, both Moraga and Magaña create plays inspired by Mayan practices that have existed since before the 16th-century arrival of the European men and the invention of what is now Guatemala. Moraga negotiates her relationship to indigeneity as a Xicana through a series essays as well as her puppet theatre, *Hearth of Earth: A Popol Vuh Story* (2001a), where she stages a narrative and a ceremony taken from the Popol Vuh itself. Magaña's *Los Enemigos* (1990) is a Mexican play inspired by the Rabinal Achí, the Mayan drama that has been performed in the Guatemalan town of Rabinal since the century before the European

invasion. Given that *Heart of Earth* and *Los Enemigos* are based on the playwrights' research into the archives containing the written forms of both Mayan performative practices, I suggest that Moraga and Magaña invent an ideology of indigeneity that is rooted in the colonial archive as much as Usigli's own version of racial performativity. Neither of these two playwrights is a Mayan indigenous practitioner of the Popol Vuh or a dancer in the Rabinal Achí, and they can only access the "Mayan book of the dawn of life and the glories of Gods and Kings" and the "Mayan drama of war and sacrifice" through the multiple transcriptions, translations and publications of these sets of practices. Still, Moraga and Magaña make no acknowledgement of the relationship between their plays and the archival knowledge they employed in creating them. Their ideological blind spot not only ignores each artist's strategic invention of Indians for the sake of Mexican and Xicana theatre, it also limits their understanding of indigenous performativity to the archival documents written by the Lords of Quiché and Rabinal at the height of the Maya's imperial reign. In Moraga's case, her theory of writing as ceremony and embodiment is based on the elite class of Aztec men in charge of keeping, divining and transferring the divine word of the gods before the time of Cortés; her indigeneity is made up of both pre-Columbian Aztec and Mayan imperial times. Even though the playwrights

rewrite the Popol Vuh and the Rabinal Achí for their respective national stages, their imagination of indigeneity thinks of Indians in terms of myths and archives. Their ideologies of race do not see the Mayans in their Indian presents, but as the subjects of tragedy (antihistorical) and without a possible history of the present (both anti-historical and a-historical).

Usigli's archive is limited to a colonizer's notes about indigenous religiosity and performativity, but the archive that inspires Moraga and Magaña belongs to a different time and a different Indian brought together by the Conquest of the Americas. Moraga is most clear in staking a claim to indigeneity for her own ideological purposes: she says she turns to the Popol Vuh as a myth that can give her access to the past eradicated through the Conquest. What's more, she wants access to that indigeneity untouched by colonialism so she can preserve it now for the sake of a future of race beyond the colony.[5] The manuscript of Magaña's play opens by announcing that *Los Enemigos* is a tragedy loosely based on the original Mayan drama staging the defeat and eventual decapitation of the Man of Rabinal. This warning may be as much as the playwright says about his play's relationship to the original, but that he rewrites the Rabinal Achí through a Western form

[5] The first epigraph by Moraga is taken from her essay, "An Irrevocable Promise: Staging the Story Xicana," in *Radical Acts: Theatre and Feminist Pedagogies of Change*, Ed. Ann Elizabeth Armstrong and Kathleen Juhl. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007a. Quote on page 54.

of art derived from the Ancient Greeks more than speaks for itself: *Los Enemigos* is a mimicry of the Rabinal Achí, but it is strategically placed far removed from the original ceremony. Magaña too espouses an ideology of race that places indigeneity solely in the time of antiquity documented in the archive.

I argue that *Los Enemigos* and *Heart of Earth* establish a temporal and racial incongruence between coloniality and colonialism when their authors introduce the historical experience of the Conquest into the plays. The Popol Vuh was originally set to writing in the K'iche' language using the Latin alphabet under the auspices of Christian officials in the early 16th-century, and the narrative only briefly references the colonization of Mayan peoples in its opening and closing remarks. The Rabinal Achí made no mention at all of the Conquest when it was originally performed in the century prior to the arrival of the Spanish. The pre-Columbian Mayan performers did not reference the Conquest because it did not exist yet, and their contemporary performances of the Rabinal Achí make no mention of it now whenever the ceremony is performed in this day and age. As the epigraphs above evidence, however, the playwrights rewriting the Popol Vuh and the Rabinal Achí deliberately give colonialism center stage even when the originals consciously choose to do otherwise. My point here is not to

simply compare the rewrites to the originals, nor to dismiss them for not doing justice to these. Rather, I wish to highlight each playwright's investment in knowing the Indian for the sake of the present through a means that actually sidelines indigenous peoples' historical experiences with colonialism.

Moraga's most recent essays articulate a desire to know a history before Spanish colonialism came to eradicate a peoples whose cultural practices are now lost to her. Ironically, her invention of indigenous ceremonies untouched by the Conquest reifies colonialism's effects on the lives of today's Mayan peoples. As the Daykeeper of Moraga's Xicana play states, the action in *Heart of Earth* takes place 500 years after the Spanish arrived with swords and Bibles ready to wage war on the Mayans.[6] In efforts to keep alive the prayers that indigenous children are today slowly forgetting as a result of this arrival, the playwright situates her Popol Vuh as a 20th-century a-historical and pre-modern "myth," right alongside her contemporary Mayan peoples whose Popol Vuh is a world-making practice of the present. Unlike the narrators of the play and the original book, however, these contemporary Indians are not the Lords and Kings of the

[6] The second epigraph by Moraga is taken from her play, "Heart of Earth: A Popol Vuh Story" in *The Hungry Woman*, Cherríe Moraga. Albuquerque: West End Press, 2001a. Quote on page 107.

Mayan empire devastated by the Conquest. The Mayans who today make their world following the Popol Vuh do so not out of a belief in a-historical myth nor to divine a creation story through Western antihistorical tragedies, but as a practice of everyday life in their Mayan presents. Much to their detriment, Moraga relegates these living Mayans to the myths of an ancient past damned by the arrival of the Spanish.

In Magaña's play, not only does the playwright take artist freedom to write characters and plots that are completely absent in the Rabinal Achí, he introduces the Conquest into a Mayan drama whose performances are not invested in either race or the Spanish invasion. The contemporary performances have weathered the effects of 500 years of colonialism on the town of Rabinal and the lives of its peoples, but the performances and their transcription focus on the battles between Rabinal and Quiché, not the colonization of the Mayans. The Pilmama warns the two warriors representing each town to worry not about their internal differences, but about the upcoming wars of the Spanish conquest that will turn their present and past lives into dust. Since at no other point in the play does Magaña reference the Conquest, nor the difference between the Spanish and the indigenous peoples established in it, I suggest that this moment emerges as exemplary of the author's desire to know the Indian produced from the

original tragedy of the Americas. Emilio Carballido (1990) writes in his introduction to *Los Enemigos* that the 1989 production of the play wrongfully attached the phrase "the invention of America" to its title because the play is not about invention at all. The Pilmama's words prove otherwise, since her discreet introduction into Magaña's tragic play privileges the invention of race and the Americas over the Mayan drama of war and sacrifice. Even though the indigeneity of *Los Enemigos* belongs to a precolonial imperial history, her prediction of the fall of this imperial culture hints at the invention of the Indian that went hand-in-hand with the invention of America.

Moraga and Magaña do not acknowledge in their rewriting of Mayan performances that their plays stem from their own desire to know the Indian for the sake of the present. Both playwrights are inspired by Mayan practices that existed *before* and *without* a Western modernity that was put in place in the 16th-century, but the Popul Vuh and the Rabinal Achí are Mayan practices that also continue to be performed *within* and *beside* the West today. The rewrites of the Rabinal Achí and the Popol Vuh set aside the Mayan peoples' experiences with a history of colonialism that has yet to reach its conclusion. The Xicana writes that she looks to a mythological pre-Columbian past to secure the future of indigeneity without colonialism, but

the indigeneity she performs now is still framed by an imperial Indian that is incongruent with the Mayans whose histories of the present are performed under the guises of colonialism. A similar ideal of indigeneity is found in the Mexican dramatization of a battle between the Lord of Quiche and the Rabinal invader: the Indians of Magaña's play live in the time of Mayan gods and Mayan lords about to be overshadowed by the time of Conquest. Instead of producing an art form in relation to the Mayan peoples living beside them as coeval in the present, these artists' desire to know indigenous peoples in the 20th-century leads them to invent an anti-historical ideology of indigeneity that places the Indian outside of history itself.

"Against Knowledge" stems from this dilemma of desiring to know the Indian without accounting for the coloniality of modernity. As a result of this, the native that Moraga and Magaña stage is the one that lived *prior* to the West. Their collusion in making indigenous peoples unaccountable of the colony, I argue, frames *Heart of Earth* and *Los Enemigos* within a colonial residue that excises Indian presents from their 20th-century stage. Like Usigli's tragedies, the coloniality of their MeXicana theatres erase the Indians whose livelihood is conditioned by the time of damnation.

Xicana Inventions Beyond the Colony

Cherríe Moraga has continuously insisted that she writes theatre and prose as a kind of ceremonial ritual with which to resist colonization. The purpose of her anticolonial projects, she says, is to prevent the erasure of the indigenous heritage of Chicanas/os and to recuperate an indigenous ancient knowledge that she claims was killed in the Conquest of the Americas. The playwright argues that Aztlán, the mythical homeland of Chicana/o revolutionaries, failed as a revolutionary project because Chicanas/os looked to mestizaje without recognizing that mestizaje is a centuries-long genocidal project erasing the indigenous peoples and their practices (Moraga 2007b). She also says that since it is her right to know what she has lost, she has the right to pick and choose what she feels is necessary to invent her indigeneity and to reclaim her lost connection to the precolonial time of the ancients (2001b, 2007b). One of the most essential elements that make up her indigenous ideal are the elite indigenous scribes of the Aztec and Mayan precolonial empires, whose epistemic and ceremonial practices she wishes to replicate with her "indígena" that existed before colonialism. Thus, the Indian of Moraga's Xicana theatre of liberation lives in the time of myth and outside of history, what she calls a future time "beyond the colony" (2007a).

Moraga centers on indigenous peoples as her theatre's subjects of address through a mode that is essentially tragic. Her antihistorical indigeneity seemingly derives from the same precolonial temporality as Usigli's because both playwrights believe that their access to precolonial pasts is virtually inconsequential of colonialism. After all, neither Moraga or Usigli acknowledge that what and how they know about the peoples of the pre-Columbian period is made possible through colonial projects. Unlike the Mexican brand of tragedy that sees colonialism as a thing of the past, however, she does not at all follow Usigli's temporal scale to believe that the Conquest has already ended. For Moraga, Indians are still colonized and she makes it her ideological and artistic project to find something untouched by the Conquest so indigenous peoples can no longer be erased from history. She insists on owning an indigeneity and a past she claims has been lost to her as a result of colonization, and she writes as a method for bringing back what she has lost. The radical potential of her theatre of liberation lies not only in articulating the dire need to make a world where colonial relations do not organize the order of everyday life, she also has a project in mind with which to invent a future beyond the colony.

The ideology of indigeneity at play in Moraga's Xicana theatre of liberation, however, is founded on a set of contradictions that makes it

difficult to embrace and reflect on her anticolonial project as indeed providing a viable path towards decolonial freedom for indigenous peoples. On the one hand, the playwright is rightfully unapologetic in her desire to bring about a different history of the present for the Americas, one where colonization does not effectively succeed in killing off the indigenous peoples of this hemisphere. On the other hand, Moraga first articulates a project of liberation and its ideal subject of address fashioned after her own experiences with indigeneity and colonialism, and then employs her indigeneity to stand in for *all* indigenous peoples. Therein lies my ideological conundrum: she invents an Indian subject whose life was thoroughly destroyed with the coming of the colony, but this eternal Indian does not actually reflect the existence of those indigenous histories of the present that did not die along with their precolonial empires. She seeks a future for race beyond the colony and a time where colonialism is no longer the order of the day, but she very consciously refuses to account for the actual ways in which colonial relations frame the reality of her colonial present.

Moraga's temporality of race is nevertheless taking place in the terrain of colonialism. When she picks and chooses what elements and ideas she needs to project race onto a future beyond the colony, her ideologies of race and time prove incongruent with the lives of the indigenous whose reality

inspire her theatre. Her prose and her theatre beg questions regarding her understanding of liberation: whose liberation is she articulating? Liberation from what and for whom? How is her theatre articulating both the subject of liberation and the process of liberation itself? My intentions behind this set of questions are not to dismiss the artist's identification with indigeneity, nor to challenge her desire to fill a tragic history of loss with something else, but to interrogate the terms with which she envisions a future time for racialized subjects. My engagement with Moraga is two-fold. I first argue that her indigeneity is not only antihistorical in the tragic sense, it is also anti-historical in that it makes Indians belong to the time of ancient myths and outside a history of the present. In seeking to bring an end to tragedy, she decides to place indigenous peoples outside of history itself. I then trace Moraga's tragic and a-historical Indian in *Heart of Earth: A Popol Vuh Story* (2001a). My analysis of the play argues that, as part of the Xicana's oeuvre, the play excises contemporary Mayan peoples from her theatre of liberation because they are not living through a Popol Vuh in the antihistorical time of myth, but in the historical 20th-century present now. The "irrevocable promise" of Moraga's Xicana inventions beyond the colony is detrimental to Mayan peoples because she relegates their lives to precolonial pasts (2007b).

Indeed, as with Usigli's indigenous performative, Xicana theatre colonizes the Indian subjects that Moraga claims to liberate.

In "An Irrevocable Promise: Staging the Story Xicana," Moraga states that her "writing is an act prompted by intuition, a whispered voice, a tightening of the gut. It is an irrevocable promise to not forget what the body holds as memory" (Moraga 2007a, 45). As a playwright, her ceremonial act of writing takes on an explicitly political purpose to prevent the erasure of embodied memory:

> Writing for the stage is the reenactment of this ceremony of remembering. Experience first generated through the body returns to the body in the flesh of the staged performance. In this sense, for me, it is as close to direct political activism as I can get as an artist, for theater requires the body to make testimony and requires other bodies to bear witness to it. The question remains: *bear witness to what?* It is a question all artists, the survivor-children of Amerikan genocide, must ask. And so I, too, ask myself most simply: what is the story Xicana? (45, emphasis in the original).

Moraga's point to think of writing as a ritual endows the practice of writing with a life beyond the pen and paper. Rather than thinking of writing solely as a linguistic practice, she compliments language with a theatre and a theory of embodiment. The staged performances of her plays produce the written word as living body with a history of experiences, experiences that regenerate themselves in the flesh of this body when it acts on the stage. Combined with spoken and written language, the performance modality of

embodiment produces a living language that remembers histories past and present. Embodiment also depends on a relational space to exist because it "requires other bodies to bear witness to it" and partake in the making of testimony to these histories. This need for relationality imbedded in her theatre is especially necessary for the "survivors-children of Amerikan genocide" remembering this tragic experience. The spelling of "Amerikan" with a "k" instead of a "c" does not reference either the America of U.S. nationalism or the Latin American accented América. Amerika is both and neither of these entities because it refuses their geopolitical borders flattening out and dividing the cultural geography of the hemisphere. Moraga's strategy in inventing this word is to oppose both America and América and remind us of a common experience of genocide uniting the hemisphere. Since she is simultaneously invoking genocide, embodiment and Amerika, the first experience that generated these three terms relates back to a very particular body in mind. The story Xicana that Moraga is asking for is the history of indigenous peoples, and the point of origin for the embodiment she is theorizing are those bodies that perished in the post-Columbian period.

The task at hand for Moraga is to reflect back on and locate the stories embodied in Xicana survivors and children of the genocide that took

place in the terrain of the colony. As one of these survivor-children, however, Moraga also faces the challenge of not having the tools with which her embodiment can articulate the indigenous lives, experiences, knowledges, and worlds that were killed under Spain's genocidal conquest.

> I have never questioned the revolutionary *potential* in bringing the Xicana experience full-bodied to the center of the stage (and page). What I do question are the forms, the shapes in which that staged story-telling might be rendered. What languages do we use? What physical action? What objects are called forth? What voices? Help me remember, I ask of my dioses, what I never read and may never have witnessed, but somehow know. This is the mantra of my own writing process. Help me believe I have the *right* to remember and know what at times only my troubled heart tells me to be true (Moraga 2007a, 46; emphasis in the original).

If the colony came to kill her ancestors, and with them what she has "never read and never have witnessed," then the revolutionary potential of Xicana stories is not only to make embodiment possible, but to "somehow know" what genocide destroyed to make it unknowable ever after. Moraga is not interested in producing these indigenous stories and their embodiment through her theatre without being questionable of the manners in which these are made knowable for her. Even though Xicanas rightfully know they have stories that are historically denied to them, Xicanas' revolutionary potential can only be fulfilled if they are held accountable for how they actually come to remember the performance forms employed to represent

the past. The logic of her argument is complicated, perhaps even circular: Xicanas have stories they can represent on stage, but they can be revolutionary only if they hold themselves accountable for the way in which they access and know the forms through which they represent. I suggest that this complexity is itself derived from the unimaginable experience of genocide that Moraga has survived as a child of Amerika. How can she know and recover that which is no longer knowable or recoverable because it was killed? The impossible scenario produces in her an epistemic anxiety over what and how she remembers, but she finds an answer to impossibility in her gods. Unlike the Indians' exterminated human bodies, the Indians' gods have survived genocide to Moraga's present day. Divinity legitimates her rightful desire to know and remember what colonialism tells her she does not. The colony killed both her peoples and their gods, but she survived and so did her gods with her.

The manner in which the Xicana playwright articulates her theory of performance –both theatre as playwriting and as embodiment– is based on a need to survive the physical and epistemic violence carried out against indigenous peoples. Moraga understands indigenous peoples' history with colonial terror as an experience that did not end when the Amerikan hemisphere claimed its independence from European empires. Since the

effects of genocide are still being experienced, it cannot be said yet that genocide has reached its conclusion. The Conquest of the Americas may be over for non-indigenous peoples relinquished from Spanish rule, but indigenous peoples still cannot claim their world without colonialism and without its lasting aftermath. Moraga doesn't directly name "colonialism" per se, so it can be argued that she is not referencing a specific historical experience. However, she is expressing the reality that she is being denied access to knowledge and world-making practices as a result of indigenous genocide, which in an of itself is not a singular historical moment but a historical process that began with the arrival of the Spanish centuries ago. Even if she does not literally name colonialism when she expresses her body's desire to know what is denied to her, the experiences she is regenerating through her theatre *are* deriving from conquest. The history of Amerikan genocide cannot be denied and the surviving indigenous peoples are still living its consequences well after the formal project of the Conquest ended.

Moraga's embodiment can be thought about as a refusal to see coloniality as an adequate descriptor of indigenous peoples' experiences with colonialism, hers included. Coloniality reflects the effects of formal colonialism well after its demise, and in this sense it has little to say to the

peoples whose lives take place under colonial relations everyday. The way Moraga articulates colonialism as an unending project reneges coloniality because anticolonialism and decolonization never came to liberate indigenous peoples of either America or América. The colonial difference more adequately describes the modern indigenous peoples, because without liberation at hand, today's Indian peoples have been experiencing modernity through its colonial underside since its invention 500 years ago. Still in the colony, Moraga's theatre wants to bring about its end and liberate the colonized:

> Only a truly liberationist teatro could house an uncompromised story of dissent, one where the axis upon which freedom is imagined spins freely from an alternate world view… It is a theatre generated not from neo-liberal Latin American notion of mestizaje nor corporate-conspired definition of multiculturalism nor academic-inspired discourse on hybridity nor New Age fantasy of indigeneity; but one conceived by those who have been erased by the official narrative of colonization. It is *our* liberationist theory assuming flesh on the América stage. It is *our* work of resistance. It is a *living* art, requiring tools of *our* making, our *own* objects, our sacred and profane practices; or maybe for us lost mestizos, it is just some clumsy grasping at a pre-colonial language and a history almost forgotten (Moraga 2007a, 52; emphasis in the original).

Xicana theatre is a decolonial project envisioning a future world that rotates otherwise from the colony. Its subjects of address are also its artists and performers, those whose lives have been erased from colonialism's official narratives and are making their impossible histories the tools which they

create art. The decolonial imaginary of Xicana theatre breathes life back onto those bodies who genocide did not predict would live to tell the tale. As an essayist, dramatist, performer, Indian and mestiza, Moraga's subjectivity is constituted through the communal: "*our* liberationist theory assumes flesh on the América stage. It is *our* work of resistance. It is a *living* art, requiring tools of *our* making, our *own* objects, our sacred and profane practices," she insists.[7] Plural subjectivity speaks not as an individual, nor for an individual, but *for and as a group* who refuses to compromise their practices for the sake of freedom. Colonial subjects themselves will determine the terms under which their liberation will be achieved, and they will require that freedom be exercised through the sacred and profane practices that colonialism says it has erased. The alternate worldview of liberationist theatre is the view of the colony from the bodies of colonial subjects, those who create the art of the stage through their colonial difference of the modern world.

The agents and subjects of address of Moraga's theatre also slip from the path of liberation, if only for a moment: for those mestizo bodies "lost" from their biologically indigenous parents and their indigenous practices, making art with Indian tools and on Indian terms may just be "some clumsy

[7] As with "Amerika," Moraga is using "América" to unite both Latin America's and the U.S.' definition of the term. I would also argue that Amerika and América can encompass Canada and the Caribbean, since these regions are as much a part of the hemisphere as are Latin America and the U.S.

grasping at a pre-colonial language and a history almost forgotten" (Moraga 2007b, 52). Although a communal practice, the liberation that Moraga has in mind is not universally attainable and mestizos have to be especially worrisome of the ways in which they lay claims to indigeneity. Evidently, not everyone can claim an indigenous ethos for the sake of radical projects of art and liberation, and she is critical of mestizos recovering what they do not know. On the hand, I think that Moraga's critique is pointing back to the complex, if not contradictory, desires to recover what colonial history has told her has already been killed. In being biologically and culturally removed from the Indians killed by genocide *and* the Indians that survived, how will mestizos claim what they have been twice removed from? Moraga's words suggest that unlike the indigenous subjects of colonial violence, the mestizos' experiences of colonialism is not the same as Indian peoples and they must not be clumsy when laying claims to anything indigenous. The colonial experience is not the same for everyone in the colony, and in not being a universal experience, it becomes that much more difficult to establish a concrete system from which all colonial subjects must be liberated from. On the other hand, Moraga is establishing the difference between what mestizos can claim as indigenous –the precolonial worlds that have been almost forgotten– and what indigenous peoples can claim as their own indigeneity –

both the precolonial worlds and their own present lives. Just like experiences of colonialism varied between colonial subjects, the colonial difference is equally not universal and racialized subjects do not experience the modern world in the same ways.

With these understandings of colonial difference and colonialism in mind, just who can create "a truly liberationist teatro" and whose/what scared and profane practices can assume "flesh on the América stage" (Moraga 2007b, 52)? If not all colonial subjects experience colonialism in the same way, then it follows that a Xicana theatre of liberation must be aware of who is eligible for freedom. It also follows that, in identifying the subjects of liberation, the indigeneity these lay claims to must also be questioned because the indigeneity of mestizos is not the same indigeneity of indigenous peoples. Since the mestizos of the colony are the ones she brings in for questioning, their indigenous subjectivity cannot be as eligible for liberation as the indigenous peoples whose genes have not been tainted. Even if she does not say that mestizos cannot be liberated, her differentiation between the indigenous subjectivity of mestizos and that of indigenous peoples makes it almost explicit that the former can actually be excluded from freedom altogether. This logic of embodiment and selection of liberation-eligible indigenous subjects, I suggest, runs the risk of

trafficking in the language of racial purity and ethnic authenticity. The playwright avoids accounting for these colonialist arguments of race and ethnicity by not explicitly naming the referent of her ideal indigenous. Still, I ask, just who is the Xicana's Indian and just what are her sacred and profane stories?

Moraga defines her indigeneity not as a romantic ideal but as strategic invention:

> I have no nostalgia about some idealized original tongue we, the thousands of tribes that make up the Xicano nation, once had… I am both the freed slave and the enslaved. I am talking out of both sides of my mouth. I contradict and speak to you in their language, which is my language. And is not. I am the mestiza: the Indian and white, more white than Indian. I have forgotten almost everything. I pick and borrow what I can to try and find my way to a manner of expression that will, from the simple vantage of an eight year old, stop greed. I want to turn the sign around (Moraga 2007a, 52-53).

She defines indigeneity in two ways. First, she describes indigeneity as spoken language, tribalism and ethnic nationalism. The tribes of Aztlán are not at all nostalgic for the language they originally had, but they are slaves to a world that wants them to "[forget] almost everything." Secondly, indigeneity is also a set of practices with an ideological purpose in mind: Moraga picks and chooses what she can "to turn the sign around" from language that is and is not hers, and towards a language expressed through her own body. If colonial history tells her that she has no original language

and she does not exist, then her ideology of indigeneity produces an origin both "before and beyond the colony":

> Sometimes, as a writer, I feel my task comes down to the simply fact of declaring, Sí existimos. We exist and have always been here…. Maybe this is the same refrain in all of my work: an insistence on a presence where the world perceives absence. Maybe this is fundamentally the product of all Xicana work: to announce our presence to one another and the world, but in our own tongue, on our own ground, brandishing our own homegrown instruments of naming. This is where the project of revolutionary Teatro occurs –self-defined, self-determined, employing words and images before and beyond the colony (53).

She flat out refuses the romantic ideals of nostalgia, but lost origins do animate her desire to know what existed before the colony's arrival. Whereas the world believes Xicano Indians are non-existent, her work insists that they do, in fact, exist. Xicano Indians materialize their worldly existence through a revolutionary means that is all their own, and their mode of performance ("teatro") is reminiscent of the Aztecs of *Corona de luz*' closing scene: they too validate their existence through words and mobile images that exist beyond the logic of colonial authorities. Not interested in origins that the world says are absent, Moraga's theatre liberates the sign by inventing what she needs to know. In an "effort to uncover what [she and other Xicano Indians] don't remember," her theory of embodiment means "to use the body as a way to dig up the dirt, [and] to find something of what is left of

[Indians]" (54). She is telling us just "how hungry [her] body is to know something beyond the colony" (54), that she picks and chooses the necessary elements to bring about the time of freedom from slavery.

The theatre of liberation is the vehicle through which Moraga –and by extension all other indigenous peoples– can put an end to colonialism. In knowing something beyond the colony, the colony itself is abandoned and another world is created without colonial relations organizing the new world's order. Nevertheless, her outlining of a theory of liberation and embodiment does not yet give a body to the subject of address that all indigenous peoples can own. Besides declaring that she is a Xicana writing about the need for Xicano tribal members to insist on self-definition and self-determination through her theatre, she does not explain how or why her mestizaje makes her eligible for freedom and makes other mestizos ineligible for the same. She identifies herself as a mestiza who is more white than she is Indian, not as a mestiza who clumsily implores a precolonial origin that no longer exists. Nevertheless, the irrevocable promise of her theatre –to not let the body forget and to create a world beyond the colony– does not give the signifying Indian a racialized body that remembers outside of genetics and ideology. Moraga is a Xicana mestiza who consciously fashions her body to signify Indian, but she keeps strategically silent as to how she embodies her

ideology of indigeneity that all Indians and mestizo Indians of the Xicano nation are to make flesh through her stage. Without a viable body, all other kind of Indians besides Moraga that are living on the colony must find their own paths to self-identification and self-determination with hers as a model. She, however, leaves these Indians outside of embodied signification, hollering for freedom still.

What is Moraga's Indian body beyond the colony? Where is this future time located? "The (W)rite to Remember: Indígena as Scribe, 2004-5 (an excerpt)" (Moraga 2007b), an essay published the same year as "An Irrevocable Promise" (Moraga 2007a), addresses these questions more succinctly than does her outline of a Xicana theatre of liberation. In "An Irrevocable Promise," the playwright employs the terms "Xicana" (2007a, 45), "Mechicano" (51) and "the Xicano nation" (52) to reference the Chicano civil rights movement, its intended revolutionary subjects of address, and their indigenous homeland of Aztlán. The spelling of these terms with an "X" interchangeably with "Ch" locates her language in neither the Spanish of English alphabets, but in the language of Aztec/Mexica peoples. Chicana/o spelled with an "X" interpolates all the members of the Movimiento as indigenous peoples of the Americas, which is yet another move in which Moraga refuses the modern world's denial of their presence.

"An Irrevocable Promise" addresses the Chicanas/os identified with the Chicano Movement as "the thousands of tribes that make up the Xicano nation" (52). In a radically different mode of address, however, "The (W)rite to Remember" does not hail Aztlán and its tribes as always-already indigenous. She says that Aztlán was "resurrected by the poets of El Movimiento" to "[assert] our indigenous entitlement to the land [of the U.S. Southwest] as descendants of its aboriginal inhabitants," but "by 1970, Chicanos unwittingly resurrected the banner of 'La Raza Cósmica'" and "what [they] didn't fully comprehend at that time was the degree to which we were oppressed as *Indians*" (2007b, 383; emphasis in the original). The Chicano revolutionaries may have claimed land as "descendants of its aboriginal inhabitants," but they identified themselves with José Vasconcelos' mestizo as "a kind of 'cosmic race,' which would supercede the races of the past" (383). The Aztlán of the 1960s and 1970s was not indigenous because its mestizo revolutionaries identified with "what was an ethnocidal project already hundreds of years in the making and one of seemingly irreversible consequences" (383). As a mestizo nation, Aztlán thought indigenous peoples a race of the past, not its own present. "The measure of the political efficacy of a metaphor," says Moraga, "is if a radical living practices emerges from it" (385). Thus, with Chicana/o mestizos

making indigenous peoples dead in the past, Aztlán failed as a revolution because no radical praxis of the living emerged from it.

Moraga is equally critical of her contemporary Chicano writers who, similar to Aztlán's misidentification with indigeneity, refuse to identify themselves as indigenous peoples.

> I believe Chicano writers' fear of claiming herencia as indigenous people not as nostalgia, but as a commitment to the recuperation of indigenous principles in our daily life has created a half-literature at best and not the insurgent work we are truly capable of producing. At worst, it is a minstrel-like fakery of who we are, served up for the consumption of Euro-America (Moraga 2007b, 380).

The playwright's claims are a bit convoluted and difficult to read literarily. If I understand her, Moraga is saying that today's Chicano writers are not laying claims to an indigenous heritage *not* because of they are nostalgic for their lost origins, but because they are not committed to recuperating indigenous principles under erasure by colonialism. If I am indeed correct in my reading, then Moraga is posing a grave assault on her contemporaries and calling other Chicano writers complicit with colonialism by not partaking in her indigenous heritage recovery project. Their writings, she says, are an underdeveloped literature that is consumed as a brownface performance, because even if the writers themselves do not identify as indigenous, they do not recognize that their Euro-American consumers read

them as racially different. Her own writings, on the other hand, are not a minstrel show because she is recuperating what colonialism tells her does not exist.

> So, as people of color, if we are willing to go through the broken places first, to our own acts of self-sabotage and amnesia, we will find our authentic way home. We may have to borrow or invent, along the way, but we have the right to remember. And I can no longer let the colonizer nor colonized tell me we don't (380).

These Chicano writers can only "find [their] authentic way home" by following her theatre of liberation and denying the colonial logic telling them they do not "have the right to remember" that they are Indians. If they are to live through genocide and survive life in the colony, their writings have to identify with their indigenous heritage and invent or borrow what they need to survive life in hell.

With regards to her own indigeneity, Moraga says she "[first] went south, as other Chicanos had before [her], in search of [her] 'raíces' and a cultural connection with a contemporary México," only to find "[a] daily, and often painful reminder of my own cultural outsiderhood as a US-born Mexican of mixed parentage" (Moraga 2007b, 387-388). Moraga did not find her indigenous roots in the Mexicans of a different race and ethnicity than her own, but in the architecture dating back to the time before the colony: "the templos of México –Monte Albán, Palenque, Tulum, Teotihuacán– [led

me] into the visceral experience of a collective racial memory that everything about my personal biography rejected, but one that my writer's soul irrefutably embraced," she says (388). Like Usigli before her, she embarks on an archeological recuperation of pre-Columbian peoples by way of ancient imperial cities. Temples and "natural landscape" generated the racial memory her body was searching for:

> It was as much the natural landscape in which these templos were placed, as the buried history contained with the structures, that brought a shudder of recognition to the surface of my skin: the green moss carpet on the steps of del Templo de la Cruz en Palenque; the crash of the Caribe against the walls of Tulum; the splice of sun illuminating the jewel colored turquoise and jade of a Quetzalcóatl relief in Teotihuacán. Those templos to the gods were the edification of a history lost to me. Thus began my (re)education process and my (re)turn to Mito in search of a true god and a true story of a people (388).

Her racial memory, personal biography, writer's soul, and the skin of her body are all generated equally by fauna and stones designed to venerate the gods. The mere touch of temple moss and temple stones reminds her that she does have an undeniable history, and it is buried in them. All she needed to begin her process of recovering her lost indigenous history, was to visit these places of worship and begin her way back towards myth where she find her true gods and her true people. Racial memory and embodiment is the stuff of myth, she concludes.

Moraga herself is the ideal subject of her theatre of liberation:

> I need my ancestors or courage: storytellers who understand that their work is not wholly theirs, but at its best is divinely inspired by history and mythic memory… For me, the old myths provide me the source, the grounding for the acts of transgression my writing commits. I am not Mexica, but the herencia was gifted to me through the Chicano Movement. Without my gods […] without these icons of collective meXicana resistance, my criminal acts, as a Chicana dyke writer would have no precedent, no history, and no consequence. They would be individual and indulgent actions without a shared calling (387).

When she theorizes embodiment she says the body can only remember if a witness is there to share in the process of endowing histories with flesh. The stage of her theatre demands a communal presence to legitimate the body's right to remember, or, at least, the body can only remember if it relates beyond itself and with a larger social body that shared its past. The playwright's ideal communal body is that of her ancestral storytellers who call upon the gods to divine both history and mythic memory. Earlier she critiqued the Chicano Movement for addressing themselves as genocidal mestizos and not oppressed Indian peoples, but she is also praising Aztlán because it did pave the way for her to claim indigenous heritage as a mestiza. Her claims to Aztlán are contradictory: she critiques its racial project because it leaves the Indians as dead in the past, but she also celebrates it for telling her that she did have Indian ancestors now dead in the past. Moraga chooses to sideline contemporary indigenous peoples for the sake of their ancestral

peoples that are now dead, much like Aztlán's mestizaje refused to see the Indians as living in the 1960s and 1970s. These ancestral storytellers divine the life and the will of the gods, but they are not in the world of the living because the colony came and killed them. Moraga's indigenous embodiment is not the body of indigenous peoples who divine the gods today, but the body who died centuries ago.

In contrast to a mestizo Aztlán, "the risk" that the artists of Moraga's indigenous-identified Xicano nation "are willing to take to speak [their] truth" *is* the emergence of radical living practices (Moraga 2007, 388). Hers is a praxis whose truth's "justification may be nothing more than intuition, a simple cellular knowing it is so." However, the strategies that Moraga employs to invent a Xicana theatre of liberation are engaging with dead Indians and their mythological gods, and erasing of today's living Indians and their world-making religiosities. If the successful death and erasure of both Indians and gods are her measurements of true radical praxis, then I would argue that Moraga's articulation of her Indian ideals and the measuring tools of her artwork are detrimental to the subjects she intends to liberate. Not only will non-indigenous mestizos not be liberated from the colony because they can't adequately claim indigeneity, neither will the Indians who did not die with genocide and whose gods have not perished.

The only subjects who do posses indigenous bodies –and henceforth eligible for liberation– are the ones who can prove an undeniable truth that their DNA descends from the Indians dead in the past. The indigenous embodiment that Moraga is calling for has more to do with the body's human cells than it does with its cultural memory. Her theory is the stuff of genetics and blood tests, performed in a medical lab to measure the blood quantum required by the U.S. government to recognize indigenous peoples' rights based on biological ancestry. Indeed, genetics is Moraga's path towards liberation because her body intuitively knows the truth of her indigeneity. Some things her DNA "just" knows, and she chooses to know her living cells are the same as those of her dead Indians.

Moraga invents and borrows her indigenous heritage from peoples living in the time of pre-Columbian empires:

> Writing, too, is one of these [sacred rituals]. The best of creative writing, so grand in its particulars, is able to traverse great borders of mind and matter. The distinctions disappears. Our present moment becomes history. History is myth. Myth is story. Story makes medicine. I am in daily search of these acts of remembrance of who we once were because I believe they will save our pueblos from extinction. I believe our pre-conquest imaginations offer strategies for building self-sustaining societies today, societies that can disrupt the mass suicide of global consumption, engineered by the Empire of the United States. I believe the United States intends to disappear us and this way of knowing. So, I write (Moraga 2007b, 377).

The irrevocable promise to not let the body forget "this way of knowing" leads her to think of writing as embodied knowledge, through a theatre where language is made flesh. The same irrevocable promise also locates the body's episteme in the pre-conquest world where the history, myth and story of the present were made of the same essence. Moraga's writing and embodiment are organized in a circular order: the present can avoid genocidal extinction by writing a history of the past that can generate a myth where a story of the present can be written so the body's memory will not forget what it knows it knows. As a radical living praxis, this circularity's revolutionary potential is bringing forth salvation from extinction and saving indigenous communities from genocide. Circularity's potential for revolution also lies in its opposition to the order of the colony, which I am left to assume is a linear order where myth and story are not the same as time and history. In that case, the order of the colony places time and history within a linear framework, and the circularity of Moraga's arguments places time within a framework that is also cyclical. Her indigeneity operates around a circuit of time rather than a linear model of race where the colony's present is built on the erasure of the stories, myths, histories, and present worlds that existed before the conquest.

The promise of Moraga's Xicana story and theatre of liberation is to not let the body forget, and her theatre's story-myth-history-present fulfills this irrevocable promise by returning itself and its subject of address to the time before the colony arrived.

> The world comes together, crossing borders of topography and tongue. We borrow from one another's traditions. We. *But the profound project of transgression is only achieved by return. We know more than we know we know: the aboriginal mind at work*. I make no claims to it. I only collect broken shards of memory and try to shape a bowl that can hold the full promise of my want… Yes, going way way backwards and our writing, our art, can take us there if we require the most of it and ask it the right questions. Our journey of return is not romantic; it is ordinary. It is the dusty road of our own pitiful colonized preoccupations, which I have come to call "mundane." The marvelous mundane of our lives, where the hardest truths and the sweetest dreams are revealed (Moraga 2007b, 381; emphasis in the original).

The theatre of liberation turns backwards and writes against the grain of colonialism's linear order. This anticolonial experience is not a romantic move back along a line to an original point before the present moment. Moraga's anticolonialism is a move around time itself: to return to their own time before the colony existed, indigenous-identified artists must perform with a circular temporality in mind that is altogether different than the colony's. These artists must transgress the limits of the colony to enforce the indigenous peoples' right to "pick and choose and continue to collect, create, and invent [a] cultura" that colonialism came to kill. Indigenous theatre

artists turn to the time of the ancients and the time of the gods to connect their present's art forms with the praxis of their communal ancestors, all in a move to imagine an exit from historical tragedy through the colonial difference of modernity. Moraga's theatre of liberation is tragic in every sense of the word.

The temporality of her theatre is anticolonialism at its best because it resists the colonial order and makes the present time before and beyond the colony. Tragic temporality, however, is also anticolonialism at its worst: Moraga does not just theorize race, art and time before and after the colony, she theorizes without the colonial underside of modernity. Even though she is theorizing from the colonial difference of her "own pitiful colonized preoccupations," she frees indigenous peoples from damnation by theorizing the world as if the colony did not exist at all in the "marvelous mundane of [aboriginal] lives" (Moraga 2007b, 381). She does not actually account for the colonial world when she places the exit from tragedy in the time of the ancient Aztecs:

> In many ways, I see the project of educating my Chicano students in the trajectory of the Aztec Calmécac, those institutes of advanced study afforded the privileged classes of Pre-Columbian México. Although the children of farm, domestic, and service workers, they are the spirit-descendants of those ancestor-scribes, who five hundred years ago studied the how and why of our existence (381).

She may reprimand Chicano writers, but she educates her Chicano students in the proper ways of being indigenous. The proper way of claiming indigenous heritage is to look to the elite religious officials of the Aztec empire and study the nature of their indigenous existence through an Aztec Calmécac's spirituality. Moraga's claims are taking place on contradictory terms: her Xicano students' mundane reality of colonial existence today is legitimately indigenous because they are the spiritual descendants of specific elite imperial Aztecs, and they must learn to divine the world as their ancestral scribes.

On the one hand, the move to see Xicano students live in a time where they are not mundane beings identifies their cellular ancestors as the elite class of an empire, but it does not identify them with the cellular ancestors who were not living elite nor sacred lives under that same empire. As Walter Mignolo's (1995) and José Rabasa's (2000) exhaustive studies of the colonial period have argued, this elite class of Aztecs was among the first to be targeted for suppression/extermination when the Spanish arrived. Since the members of this class were the ones in charge of producing, interpreting, keeping, and transferring the Aztecs' knowledge throughout the empire's history, their death meant that their bodies of knowledge also extinguished along with their physical ones. Their immediate relation and

importance to indigenous knowledge makes the Aztec scribes the ideal ancestors that Moraga requires to know "the aboriginal mind at work" beyond the colony (381). She does not see the non-elite Aztecs as ideal ancestors because they did not produce the same knowledge as the holy scribes.

On the other hand, this strategic selection of the Xicana's genetic ancestors privileges a very particular mode of knowledge production that may not be as congruent with the pre-Columbian period as Moraga sets it out to be. The ideal Xicano ancestors were not farmers, domestic workers or service workers, but the elite class of Indians in charge of writing. "Writing" in the pre-Columbian period, however, did not mean the Western modes of knowledge production instituted by the Conquest. And yet, Moraga does not differentiate between the modes of writing of the post-Cortesian period — where she herself is writing about writing Indian knowledges— and those of the Aztec scribes making knowledge before Cortés arrived. Her desire to teach her students to be Indians carefully selects the kind of knowledge and the kind of ancestors these need to reach liberation, and she chooses to place their genetic origins in the bodies of an elite class whose ruling knowledge posed the most immediate threat to their Christian masters. She does not choose the non-sacred, common Aztec indigenous person whose practices

of everyday life were not made of the same divine essence as the scribes reflecting on their existential crisis, and whose everyday knowledge was further away than the scribes were from the center of the colonial order. Moraga does not reflect on the colonialist logic informing her selection of indigeneity, but the ways in which she articulates freedom are nevertheless built on her lack of accountability for the ways in which colonialism organizes what she does not know as much as it informs what she *does*. Her colonial difference does not just look before and beyond the colonialism, her freedom means to return back to a time before Cortés as if the colony is not real and does not affect what she knows of indigenous peoples.

Refusing to acknowledge that colonialism makes it possible for her to know the dead Indian of the past and regenerate this past's knowledge in her present, she writes:

> In my lengthening middle age, I am beginning to understand that writing is a rite, a kind of ceremony. And that rite, ceremonial practice, is fundamental to my writer's way. They hold a reciprocal relationship. Each one, equally earnest in its efforts to return. They depend one upon the other; each act keeps the other honest. In a society hell-bent on forgetting, ritual and ceremony reflect our effort to put ourselves in the position of remembering. The act of writing, like ceremony, is the practice to arrive at something beyond itself: that antiguo infinite "we" that can sustain us (Moraga 2007b, 386).

Moraga's theatre is tragic in that she is speaking of writing as a practice that can keep the time of the ancients alive in her own time, and her mode of

writing is animated by tragic ideas where individuality is transgressed for the sake of the communal. The Indian she entitles herself to invent as a Xicana playwright is not only the elite ancient indigenous scribe, but Indian most close to the sacred of her gods. Divinity compliments the embodiment of her writing by helping her "understand that writing is a rite, a kind of ceremony," and since she went to Mexico to find her indigenous roots in the fauna and temples of the gods, it also helps her identify her indigenous subject of address in the scenes of Aztec ceremonial practices and rituals. To build the story Xicana beyond the colony, Moraga chooses to think of the ancient imperial Indians as the true knowledge of her DNA and their epistemes in terms of Western modes of knowledge production. The people of the pre-Columbian period did not "write" in the ways that she is theorizing writing here. Ceremony, rituals and other religious practices were indeed Aztec modes of producing and transferring knowledge, but these acts made their world when they did not know Spanish colonialism. How did they continue to make the world anew after the invention of the colony? What kinds of writings did they perform then? By not accounting for ideas that would push her right to self-definition and self-determination back to her terrain in the colony, Moraga is able to project an ideology of indigeneity onto the peoples of the pre-Columbian period and the Indians alive today.

The indigeneity she wants is the dead past of Indian ceremonies, rituals, scribes, gods, and temples, but that may not be the same indigeneity of those Indians living in damnation and performing ceremonies that write the living world anew. The only subjects that her theatre of liberation can set free from the bonds of slavery are those indigenous and indigenous mestizos who identify with the Indians whose life and practices were definitely extinguished. Her theatre does not come to liberate the indigenous and the indigenous mestizos who lived through genocide and whose practices of everyday life are *not* the dead stuff of the pre-Columbian ceremonies. If the irrevocable promise of Moraga's Xicana story is help the body remember that freedom beyond the colony is possible, this same promise excludes the indigeneity of bodies who did not in fact die with the Conquest and are still living in the colony *as* Indians.

In her "Foreword" to *The Hungry Woman*, her latest collection of plays where she includes *Heart of Earth: A Popol Vuh Story*, Moraga writes that:

> In recent years, I've come to understand myth as a similarly divine(d) gift, an opening into the past, told in character and image, that can provide a kind of road map to our future. I am reminded here of the symbol for journeying employed by Meso-American scribes: little "patitas negras," black-inked and human-shaped footprints, marking out the road taken, traversing thousands of miles of desierto and montaña. This preoccupation with the past as a foretelling of our future may be the reason why I have lately begun to write stories placed in

> an imagined future. Like "a dream waiting to happen," I have written elsewhere (Moraga 2001b, ix).

The Aztec scribes that she is inspired by in "The (W)rite to Remember" are now also Mayan, as are the tragedies she is staging. The present time of race is a divine gift from the gods, and it allows her to turn back towards to the ancient time of these gods and imagine a possible future for indigenous peoples. As with the linear time of the colony, the circular time of tragedy propels race both backwards towards the past and foreword into a future where colonial relations will no longer be in place. In this circular mode, the racial temporality of Moraga's theatre reproduces the ways in which her indigenous ancestors viewed the world and divined the history of time. The scribes were preoccupied with the past because the past determined both their present and their future. Likewise, since the future of racialized subjects is what is preoccupying Moraga's theatre, she too must look back to the past and build a future from the time before her ancestors died. The future beyond the colony she outlines in her more recent essays is built on the Aztecs, but the future she writes in *Heart of Earth* stems from the ceremony divining Mayan peoples' history of the present.

In the case of the Mayan peoples and their Popol Vuh, I argue that Moraga's *Heart of Earth* is not an irrevocable promise of a better future as much as it is a promise of damnation and betrayal. According to Dennis

Tedlock's "Introduction" to the *Popul Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Gods and Kings* (Tedlock 1996), the authors of the alphabetic Popol Vuh did not write their book as a manuscript to be performed but as a transcription of a divine performance:

> When the ancient readers of the Popol Vuh took the roles of diviners and astronomers, seeking the proper date for a ceremony or a momentous political act, we may guess that they looked up specific passages, pondered their meanings, and rendered an opinion. But the authors of the alphabetic Popol Vuh tell us that there were also occasions on which the readers offered "a long performance and account" whose subject was the lighting of the whole *kajulew* or "sky-earth," which is the Quiché way of saying "world." If a divinatory reading of pondering was a way of recovering the depth of vision enjoyed by the first four humans, a long performance, in which readers may well have covered every major subject in the entire book, was a way of recovering the full cosmic sweep of that vision.
>
> If the authors of the alphabetic Popol Vuh had transposed the ancient Popol Vuh directly, on glyph-by-glyph basis, they might have produced a text that would have little sense to anyone but a fully trained diviner and performer. What they did instead was to quote what readers of the ancient book would say when they gave long performances, telling the full story that lay behind the charts, pictures, and plot outlines of the ancient book… At one point they themselves become performers, *speaking directly to us* as if we were members of a live audience rather than mere readers (1996, 29-30; emphasis in the original).

Tedlock's description of the Popol Vuh crosses two different temporalities: the pre-colonial time of the ancients where their ceremony was not a book but a set of practices performed by diviners, and the colonial time of the diviners who set their ceremony to writing using the Latin alphabet of the

colony. The anthropologist-translator places the two temporalities along a singular linear continuum when he differentiates between "the ancient readers" and "the authors of the alphabetic Popol Vuh": the latter come after the former because the colony followed the pre-colonial. He also places the two in a circular continuity: the latter's alphabetic writing could not divine in the way of the ancients –ceremony did not divine the post-Columbian mode of writing–, so the authors alter the divination ceremony and transcribe what the ancients said and did.

The sacred practices of the ancient Mayans recall the ancestors-scribes of the Xicano students and their modes of producing knowledge: knowledge, writing and divinity are in the ceremonial hands of elite imperial subjects. Moraga's scriptural practices and the alphabetic writing of the Popol Vuh are also different, however. The authors of the book produced in the colony did not write a text meant to be read, they transcribed a performance so those Mayans in the colony reading the book after them would learn to divine in the way of the ancient ceremony outlawed by the colony. Moraga's writing is a ceremonial act that divines the world assuming that the colony exists but it cannot be engaged because it outlaws her right to know. The Mayan authors writing in the colony divine in a time that is within and beyond the colony's reach; Moraga writing in the colony divines

in the time that was before, beyond and without the colonial order. Most importantly, the Mayan diviners tell their readers how to divine by implicating themselves as ceremonial speakers and listeners, thereby owning their privileged place of knowledge but choosing to disseminate divine knowledge and praxis among subjects not organized by class. They give their readers knowledge of their creation story without dictating that their ceremony must be performed in a singular modality. The person in charge of divining the Popol Vuh is called a "Master of Ceremonies" and his purpose is to share the story of the world with other Mayans who listen to his narrative voice. However, the narrative voice in the Popol is always in the plural "we" and "they," never the "I" of authorial writing. Although a singular diving body, the Master of Ceremonies' narrative voice introjects the larger social body and then projects this plurality onto the audience of his ceremony. The creation story is the same as their ancients and they do not provide instructions for selecting authentically Mayan subjects of address. Their communal knowledge was as communal as possible. After all, both the authors and their Mayan readers were living under the same genocidal gaze, not a different colonial world. Moraga's writing is not communal but imperially elite, even when she teaches non-elite students at elite universities.

Moraga's play is a transcription of a ceremony that was not originally a script nor a narrative voice divided into character parts. *Heart of Earth* is a based on a transcription of a performance that she reproduces on the stage of liberation, so like the authors of the Popol Vuh, she also divines the world through her play and shares the knowledge of divination with her actors and audience members. The format of the play transgresses the ceremonial form of the Mayans' Popol Vuh by splitting the Master of Ceremonies' voice and body into multiple personas. Even though singular voice that divines the world in the Popol Vuh implicates itself in the narrative, it never claims singular authority. The Mayan book begins in a communal "we":

> This is the beginning of the Ancient Word, here in this place called Quiché. Here we shall inscribe, we shall implant the Ancient Word, the potential and source for everything done in the citadel of Quiché, in the nation of Quiché people… [The words of Quiché] accounted for everything –and did it, too– as enlightened beings, in enlightened words. We shall write about this now amid the preaching of God, in Christendom now. We shall bring it out because there is no longer
>
> a place to see it, a Council Book,
> a place to see "The Light That Came from
> Beside the Sea,"
> the account of "Our Place in the Shadows,"
> a place to see "The Dawn of Life,"
>
> as it is called. There is the original book and ancient writing, but the one who reads and assesses it has a hidden identity. It takes a long performance and account to complete the lighting of the sky-earth … (*Popol Vuh* 63).

It is impossible to name the voice of Mayan reading and divining the ancient word of the Quiché peoples because it is refusing its readers its identity. The Master of Ceremonies does not wish to give us their face nor their name because Christendom threatens their physical life. They disappear both the original book and ancient writing to keep these knowledges safely hidden from the Christian's murderous God, and reference these points of origin only to tell us that they do exist and are enlightened as the divine gods they tell us about. Their silence is a strategy of survival, both physical and epistemic, and they address themselves, their gods, and their audiences as one Quiché body of plural subjectivity.

The shaman of *Heart of Earth* is a character named Daykeeper:

> DAYKEEPER: This is the root de la palabra anciana, in a place named Quiché. Es la raíz de un pueblo of earth and sky that we shall plant here in the hearts of its descendants. This is the story of how light was born from darkness y la luz shadowed again by the hands of the gods. We shall tell our cuento en voz alta for there is no place to read it.
>
> *[Music: "Conquistadores."]*
>
> Five hundred years ago, the bearded ones arrived in floating palacios, in search of the sun's golden secretions. They came armed with flechas of melded steel and a black book decrying their devil. Today our children know fewer and fewer Indian prayers; they put on the Ladino cloth of soldier and seller. And our book and its author keep their faces hidden (Moraga 2001a, 107).

The play begins in the same tragic temporality as the time of the ancients enunciated in the Popol Vuh. Like the authors of the book, Moraga's

Daykeeper is telling the audiences that the story of creation they are about see performed is the story of the gods and the ancient word. He peaks in the communal "we" as well, but this communal voice is not telling the same story nor performing the same ceremony of the Mayan Daykeepers. The Popol Vuh only makes reference to the Conquest when the ceremony opens "now amid the preaching of God, in Christendom now," and right before the ceremony closes (*Popul Vuh* 63). The Popol Vuh's Master of Ceremonies tell us,

> Three Deer and Nine Dog, in the twelfth generation of lords. And they were ruling when Tonatiuh arrived. They were tortured by the Castilian people (195)

Daykeeper narrates the arrival of the Spaniards in a scenario of conquest that may or may not have anything to do with the Mayans. The story that Moraga is telling here is indeed her own invention to join the details of Columbus' arrival on three ships, the Aztecs' thinking of Cortés ships as palaces floating on water, the conquistadors search for precious metals, and the wars of exterminations where the Spanish fought with divine (the Bible) and man-made (arrows, swords) technology not known on native lands. She makes no mention of Pedro de Alvarado's torturing of Three Deer and Nine God, the Lords of Quiché at the time of the conquistador's invasion. Just like with the genetic make-up of her ideal indigenous body, the history of the Mayan

peoples she chooses to stage is one that she invents for the purpose of saving a future generation of Indians.

By excluding the historical accounts of Alvarado's colonial terror and replacing it with what can be considered a generic account of the Conquest, however, the Xicana story that her future's Indian children will know will have little to do with the authors of the Popol Vuh. Along with the exclusion of Mayan colonial history and the transgression of Mayan creation story, Moraga introduces race into her story when the Popol Vuh does not name humans in the same racialized terms:

> TECOLOTE: Yes. You have the distinct honor of being summoned by the Lords [of Xibalba] to a [ballgame].
> …
> HUNAHPU: Yeah. This is going to be great! A real game! No more of this kid's pretend-stuff!
> VOCUB: I don't know, hum, I hear those güeros are a ghostly color down there. Pale people with all the blood sucked out of 'em. That's probably why they want us… for fresh blood.
> HUNAHPU: They're thirsty for blood and we're thirsty for a good challenge. Anyway, they ain't all pasties down there. Papá told me stories of how some of the women are a beautiful blood red color (Moraga 2001a, 114-115).

The authors of the Popol Vuh make no mention at all of the Spaniard's skin color, even when they reference Alvarado the word they use ("Tonatiuh") is not a reference to his body but to his destructive actions. "Güeros," "pale people" and "women [who] are a beautiful blood red color" are the stuff of

Moraga's cellular memory, what her DNA just knows. The whiteness of the conquistadors' skin color is projected onto the Lords of the Xibalba, the world of the dead where living bodies are depleted of their life essence. In turn, the brownness or redness of indigenous peoples is projected onto the indigenous peoples. White skin is oppressive, dead, non-indigenous, male, and inhuman; blood red skin is oppressed, living, indigenous, female, human, sexually desirable, and aesthetically beautiful. Since Hunahpu and Vocub impregnate Ixquic, the only woman to give birth in the play, they also make blood red skin a maternal essence embodied by indigenous woman. The racial politics espoused in the employment of these terms divide the world neatly into an order of power based on genetics. Embodiment, in this case, does not liberate anyone from colonial relations.

Moraga authorizes herself to self-identify and self-determine what Mayan indigeneity looks like, and then invent a "popul vuh story" that does not emerge from the Popol Vuh. *Heart of Earth* is not a rewrite of the original because she transgresses both the form and the content of the book. Her Xicana story is an antihistorical in the tragic sense espoused by Usigli: her play does not reproduce historical accounts but is inspired by them to create modern art in the present derived from the past. It is also anti-historical in that she refuses to account for the validity of the Popol Vuh as a

historical record of the atrocities experienced by Quiché people in the 16th-century. She writes that she is staging a ceremony that Quiché people still practice today, and like theirs, her is as a "myth" and "similarly divined gift" from the gods (Moraga 2001b, ix). If *Heart of Earth* stages a mythological world, then the ceremony it stages has nothing to do with the colony because, in the colony, myth and story are not the same as time and history. The circular temporal logic of Moraga's tragedy succeeds in performing a future world before and beyond linear time, but this future world exists without historical tragedy and denies its effects altogether in the favor of an imperial time where myth reigns supreme. As a result, the Quiché living in the colony as the damned of the modern colonial world do not fit into the eternal time of Moraga's myth. She relinquishes their lives from the world as they know it, never minding that their Popol Vuh is a ceremony whose temporality accounts for the time of the ancients, the time of the book's authors in the colony, and their own time also bound by colonial relations of power.

Tragic Mexican Brownface

Sergio Magaña's *Los Enemigos* (1990) is the Mexican playwright's "versión libre del Rabinal Achí," a Mayan ceremonial drama that was first performed in the 15th-century and is still performed in Guatemala today. Magaña, like Usigli and Moraga, says his work's theme is "épico" because it relates back to a pre-modern ancient time, and his characters "son heróicos" because their sacrifice their individual subjectivities for the sake of the communal.[8] The Mayan performance, whose title Dennis Tedlock translates as *Rabinal Achi: A Mayan Drama of War and Sacrifice* (2003), stages the defeat of the Man from Rabinal at the hands of the Man from Quiché, and the defeated warrior's demands before he is beheaded. Stepping away from original's plot and form, Magaña's version stages the sword battle between the warriors, Man from Rabinal's seduction of the woman betrothed to the Man from Quiché, the defeat of the former and his eventual heart sacrifice to the gods. The Mexican version of the Mayan drama also includes a pivotal moment where its transgression of the original is most evident. While the Rabinal Achí that has been performed for centuries does not reference the Conquest, even as it has changed forms from an indigenous ceremony to a

[8] The full title of Magaña's play is "Los Enemigos – Tragedia ballet – Versión Libre del Rabinal Achí."* The playwright includes this note at the bottom of his play's cover page:

"Nota: El tema de la obra es épico. Los personajes son heróicos."**

* *Translation:* "The Enemies – Tragedy Ballet – Based on the Rabinal Achí."

** "Note: The play's theme is epic. The characters are heroic."

play modeled after Western theatre, *Los Enemigos* slips from a tragedy without conquest to the time of the colony. In the same way that Moraga's Daykeeper projects a conquest onto the Popol Vuh, the Pilmamá's prophecy equally projects a conquest into the Rabinal Achi. I argue that Magaña's staging of the Mayan drama is dependent on the exclusion of the Mayan peoples of Rabinal Achí because they do not cut out the warrior's heart as a sacrificial ritual –like the Aztecs did–, the Rabinal does not include words in Nahuatl ("pilmama"), and their ceremony and play did not prophesize the coming of the white men. *Los Enemigos* is less a tragic rewrite of the Rabinal Achí than it is an invention of Mexican Indians in Mayan brownface.

Magaña introduces two characters into the story of the Rabinal Achí that are not part of the original: Yamanic Mun, a Quiché princess about to marry Varon de Queché (Man of Quiché), and Pilmama,[9] Mun's nanny. Soon after the Man of Rabinal is defeated and is being prepared for sacrifice, Mun declares her love for the warrior but not her fiancé. She intends to bury the Man of Rabinal against the Quiché emperor's orders denying the vanquished traitor a proper burial:

[9] "Pilmama" is a Spanish word derived from Nahuatl and means caretaker or nanny. Although the speaker is a Mayan, her name belongs to the language of the Aztecs, not the Mayans of the performance.

> MUN (to PILMAMA): Vete, anciana de mal agüero. Ve y prepara las telas más preciosas que ha tejido mi madre. Si él va a morir, lo vestiré yo misma.[10]

The burial is an act of mourning and an act of love, both designed to redeem the defeated warrior's honor as a prince of Rabinal. Sophocles' *Antigone* sets the stage for this tragic scene, since Mun's desire to honor the man she loves against her father's law recalls Antigone's similar claims to kinship and citizenship. Like the heroine of Greek tragedy, Mun's love for the vanquished Indian sends her down a path to challenge the markers of Quiché citizenship.

Mun's slippage into Greek tragedy is also telling of the play's slippage into the colonial difference and the coloniality of power. Her retort to her nanny's dismissal of the warrior's importance:

> PILMAMA: ¡Ay, pronto llegarán hombres del más allá del mar fabricados del más duro metal, sin corazón ni escrúpulos… y de todo esto harán campo de ruinas de polvo, sin pasado ni ayer. ¡Ay pobrecitos pueblos míos de Rabinal, los de Ux y Pocoman! Seremos aventados al horizonte, como flore de un árbol que tumbó el huracán del tiempo. La vida es un instante prestado por los dioses. Lo demás es el tiempo.[11]

[10] "MUN: Leave, you old crone who only brings bad omens. Go and prepare the most precious robes that my mother has knitted. If he is going to die, I will dress him for burial myself" (Magaña 1990, 93).

[11] Translation on footnote #1 of this chapter.

The Pilmama downplays the significance of the Indians's fight because a more catastrophic event is quickly approaching their horizon, and it will destroy all that know. The scene of violence between Indians will be overshadowed by the coming of the white men from beyond the sea, heartless men who will reduce their Quiché, Rabinal, Ux, Pocoman worlds to dust. More importantly, the white men's warfare will erase their histories past, present and future, and with these histories gone, so will their gods. The Pilmama's omen is exceptional, since at no other point do white men and their war against the Indians surface in *Los Enemigos*.

Magaña's slippages into tragedy and conquest are telling of a temporal logic of both race and theatre. Even though the playwright does not reference the Conquest after the Pilmama's lines, I suggest that the omen is not inconsequential. He turns to the time of tragedy as a way of engaging with the Conquest and the effects it had both on the worlds it devastated and the worlds that came after it. He is able to recuperate ancient myths of war and human sacrifice, but the gods of these ancient peoples are about to meet their end with the coming men armed to kill them. When his play recuperates them, it also recuperates these peoples' temporality that was in place before the white men arrived. The ancient Mayans come back to life in

20th-century Mexico, dressed as warriors about to be defeated by heartless men.

The Pilmama's omen foretells the battles between men, but she is also narrating the events in terms of divinity and time. For her, the battle between the Man of Rabinal and the Man of Quiché is not that important because its outcome will not impact the future as much as the battle between the Indians and the men who will come to kill them and their gods. The battles between warriors relates to divinity because the sacrificial hearts will feed the gods' hunger, but they will not be sufficient to prolong the time lent to them. Her vision is not only tragic, it is fatalistic because she sees the end of time as unavoidable and the Indians as useless to do anything to change it.

A fatalistic Indian is what Emilio Carballido celebrates as Magaña's most important creation:

> ¿*Los Enemigos* qué es? La más rara resurrección de un sacrificio humano, de cómo y por qué, de normas de vida y conductas conforme a escalas de valores primitivas que, extrañamente, Sergio nos vuelve inmediatas… Todo el texto tiene brío, elegancia, algo que casi da arrobamiento ante la habilidad para llenar el lenguaje con palabras indígenas que suenan con timbre de oro. Un triunfo literario. La progresión, la esencia, vienen de la antigua obra quiché.[12]

[12] Emilio Carballido, "Prologo: Nosotros, los de entonces." *Los Enemigos*, Sergio Magaña. Mexico, DF: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, S.A., 1990.
* *Translation:* "What is *Los Enemigos*? The rarest resurrection of a human sacrifice, of the how and why, of norms of life and behaviors according to primitive scales of morals that, strangely enough, Sergio makes like our own… The entire text has great spirit, elegance, something that almost makes one blush with its ability to fill language with indigenous

Carballido does not celebrate Magaña's tragic heroes because they link his present with Sophocles' ancient tragedies, but because *Los Enemigos* brings back to life the primitive knowledges he thought were dead. The play makes the language of Mexican theatre anew by filling it "con palabras indígenas que suenan con timbre de oro," an aesthetic both Mexican playwrights thought was lost to them. Apocalyptic omens ring with golden timber when pronounced by characters with indigenous names, characters whose words tell a tale that survived the apocalypse itself.

Carballido's celebratory review of the play ignores that Magaña was inspired to create a fatalistic and primitive Indian aesthetic through his encounter with indigenous peoples who live in his own modern time, not the primitivism of his aesthetic. He writes in his "Prólogo" that Magaña wrote a series of plays on the pre-hispanic Aztecs after he conducted extensive archival research on these peoples' history. The plays he names –*Moctezuma II* and *Cortés y Malinche*–, however, were inspired by historical peoples who lived in the colony and not the pre-colonial period. Both playwrights first conflate vastly different and opposing historical periods and then project this a-historical ideology of indigeneity onto the Mayans of the Rabinal Achí.

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words that ring with a golden timber. A literary triumph. Its progression, its essence, come from the ancient Quiché masterpiece" (34).

Carballido also says that Magaña spent time in Central America, an experience I conclude also complimented his archival research on indigenous peoples by allowing him opportunities to meet the Mayan peoples who lived in the region. The playwright, however, says that Magaña's search and the resulting plays about indigenous peoples "no [son] algo arqueológico," but

> una interpreatación política y humana de un texto ritual prehispánico; una proposición formal y visual creada a partir de la idea de drama bailado que proponen "Rabinal Achí" y nuestro teatro de danzantes.[13]

Los Enemigos is not archeological because it synthesizes the forms of dance performed in the Mayan drama and the Mexican theatre troupe. It is also a contradiction because the Rabinal Achí that Magaña must have witnessed performed in the department of Quiché does not include the Aztec sacrificial scenes where the defeated warrior's hearts are cut out of their living bodies and then offered to the gods. Nor do the Maya of Rabinal perform their Rabinal Achí as a Western tragic play with female characters named after Aztec words. The synthesis that Carballido sees in Magaña's

[13] Quote: "¿Qué es 'Los Enemigos'? Una interpreatación política y humana de un texto ritual prehispánico; una proposición formal y visual creada a partir de la idea de drama bailado que proponen 'Rabinal Achí' y nuestro teatro de danzantes. No es algo arqueológico. Hace Magaña el enfrentamiento de un pueblo dominante, imperialista diremos hoy, y un pueblo sometido y explotado, el de los quechés." (Carballido 1990, 41).
* *Translation*: "What is *Los Enemigos*? It is humane and political interpretation of a pre-Hispanic ritualistic text; a visual and formal proposition created from the idea of dance drama that 'Rabinal Achí' and our own dance troupe. It is not archeological. Magaña makes possible the confrontation between an oppressive people, what today we would call imperialist, and an oppressed and exploited people, that of the Quiché."

primitive and aesthetic Indian is an invention of sorts that is far removed from the Mayans that Magaña met in the time he spent in Central America. In not reflecting at all the reality that they say inspire them, the implications of Carballido's oversight and Magaña's primitivism effectively exclude the Maya and their Rabinal Achí from the modernity of their Mexican theatre.

Against Knowledge

I did not originally begin writing this chapter with Rodolfo Usigli's theory of tragedy, nor the rewrites of Mayan dramas and ceremonies by Cherríe Moraga or Sergio Magaña, on my mind. Instead, I started writing "Against Knowledge" with a personal anecdote detailing a memory from many years ago, and in that memory I first begin to reflect on an almost innate desire to know indigenous peoples without an attachment to colonialism.

Writing this chapter took me back to my undergraduate days at Brown University, where in 2005 I took one my most memorable courses taught by a historian of Colonial Latin America on "Maya in the Modern World." The course was originally designed as a senior seminar on colonial history, but given the time frame in which he developed the syllabus, he said his students asked for more readings on contemporary Mayan peoples and

less on colonial historiography. The early and mid-1990s saw public figures like Rigoberta Menchú and EZLN's Subcomandante Marcos rise to the international spotlight for their efforts in bringing justice to indigenous peoples living under oppressive, neoliberal and military governments in both Guatemala and Mexico. Just as the decades-long armed struggle between Guatemala's military states and peasant and guerrilla groups –i.e. the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres– came to a halt, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) went public against Mexico's self-proclaimed democratic government in 1994 and called for the recognition of a plural state and civil society on the eve of the North American Free Trade Agreement's effective date. For my professor and his students, these events taking place in the Lacandon jungle and Guatemala, and resonating in their own livelihood, made the present lives of Mayan peoples a more urgent case study than these peoples' colonial and precolonial histories. The end result was a syllabus that addressed the contemporary moment of the Maya through a historical and anthropological lens, and included a vast array of accounts of the events leading up to the Zapatista insurrection, Menchú's Nobel Prize, and the Guatemalan civil war where hundreds of thousands of indigenous lives were massacred.

In a class discussion on the Popol Vuh that concluded with my peers dubbing me "Modernity Boy," the professor began by asking us an open-ended question: How many of us thought that the book we had in our hands was the same Popol Vuh being divined in Guatemala by the Maya? Assuming that the question was a statement meant to incite their positive agreement rather than critical inquiry, the majority of my peers raised their hands. Yes, they agreed, our books were made of the same divine essence divined by Mayan peoples. Meanwhile, a few of us sat in our chairs, hands on desk, not in agreement with those holding their hands up.

Earlier in the semester I had raised questions regarding the truth claims and translation of Rigoberta Menchú's testimonio –from *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* to *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*–, and argued that the very act of reading her in translation positioned English readers one step removed from the original speech act in Spanish. Before delving into David Stoll's arguments on the truth-value of Menchú's testimonio, I urged us to not forget that the Spanish book had been first transcribed and heavily edited into a chronologically ordered narrative by Elizabeth Burgos. That distancing of Menchú's voice had to be taken into account when we contested the truth and fiction of her narrative authority that had been elided from the start. Could any

questioning of Menchú's native authority and experiences with terror take place without engaging with the displacement of the native through the transcription, editing, publication, and translation of her persona?

Similarly, with regards to the Popol Vuh, I insisted that the book's multiple writing, publication and translation history in K'iche', Spanish, French, and English, from the pre-Columbian period to the present, could not make our copies of Dennis Tedlock's translation the same as the ceremonial divinations that Mayan peoples held in their hands in Guatemala. I posed the professor's question differently: Were Mayan peoples who practiced the Popul Vuh in Guatemala and elsewhere reading the translation that the anthropologist had made of the earliest surviving copy of the book now archived at the Newberry Library? I suggested that the book we were holding in our hands in that classroom at Brown University was a derivate of conquest in that the Popol Vuh had survived the tragedy of Columbus' arrival through a series of non-native interventions into native life lasting to our modern day. Most of my peers, however, rejected my questions on the grounds that the book we were holding was a version of the Popol Vuh, which, even if it was not the original and we were not its indigenous practitioners, was still a copy of the original indigenous knowledge. I argued that the processes through which our copies came into being were colonialist

because of the imposition of Western modes of knowledge production imposed on Mayan peoples since the 16th-century. The text we were reading as evidence of the Mayan life in the modern world was equally evident of a history of colonialism that was making possible our knowledge of Mayan texts and religiosities that originated well before Columbus set foot on native soil. My intent in asking these sets of questions was not to interrogate the indigenous authenticity of Tedlock's book. I wanted to push our engagement with the book and see it as a representation of indigeneity that had more to do with the colonial project of modernity that made it possible to invent indigenous peoples, and less to do with the world-making practices of Mayan peoples themselves. Colonialism aside, my peers insisted, our copies of the book were not less indigenous than the indigenous peoples *not* holding a translated printed copy. And so it was that our *Popol Vuh* was the same as the K'iche' Mayans'.

I reflect back on this anecdote to attempt to understand the ways in which my peers articulated their desires to access native epistemologies through non-native means, an articulation that left their epistemic desires unquestioned. Those days in the classroom were pedagogical and epistemological moments where, at least for a few of my peers and I, the moves to know the modern condition of indigenous peoples in reality

imagined native life as timeless and seemingly untouched by colonialism. Allow me to play devil's advocate here and agree with the arguments by Stoll that were discussed in the class. In Menchú's case, the Indian lied in her testimonio, Stoll has told us how and why she lied, the knowledge Menchú has given us is a farce, and her non-Mayan readers are entitled to know the real story. Leaving the historical tragedy suffered by indigenous peoples aside, what matters most to Stoll and his supporters is knowing just what truthful knowledge she was keeping from us and why. The Indian remained silent in parts of her testimonio and we, being the modern and Western readers that we are, desire to possess the Indian's knowledge. The same epistemic desire to access native episteme underlined my peers' insistence on the native authenticity of our copies of the *Popol Vuh*: we had true indigenous knowledge in our hands, regardless of how many languages, published editions, translators, and centuries had passed since the sacred book was (perhaps) put into a K'iche' codice in the department of Quiché before the Spanish invaded.

The emphasis on authentic native knowledge untouched by colonialism is what was most perplexing to me, since in their goals to know the Maya in the modern world my peers were thinking of modernity without coloniality, as if our modern time and the modern time of the Indians were

partaking along the same temporal frame without its accompanying historical tragedy. And yet, I believe that any attempts by Western readers to claim access to an original truth about native peoples' lives and epistemes as unmediated by colonial projects are undeniably questionable. The burning of the Mayan codices during the Conquest, the writing of the oral tradition into K'iche' using the Latin alphabet in 1558, the multiple translations of the native book into Western languages since its discovery by Jesuit friars in 1701, and the Newberry's acquisition of the earliest available copy of the written Popol Vuh that was originally stolen by Charles Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg in the 19th-century– these are the modes in which Western modernity effectively colonized but did not eradicate indigenous peoples and their bodies of knowledge. Sidelining this tragic cycle of colonial terror holds on to the possibility of further repeating centuries of colonialism.

Usigli, Moraga and Magaña also hinge on this tragic potential to reproduce epistemic violence when their art traffics in a time without colonialism. Magaña's projection of the Conquest of Mexico onto a Mayan history of colonialism betrays the original drama of war and sacrifice by imposing a narrative and a tragic form of theatre that are incongruent with Mayan Indians. Similarly, Moraga's decolonial project to find an Indian without colonialism does not account for the reality of the colonial present

occupied by indigenous peoples and the artist herself. These playwrights' predecessor is no different. Even if Usigli produces a postcolonial theatre for a Mexico living beyond the colony, he too binds Indians to a time of colonialism where they are forever damned to live under the colonial gaze, and never to perform in the present. The artists' desire to find an exit from the terrain of the colony leads to them to desire an Indian knowledge and a subject capable of transgressing the tragic temporalities and histories of colonialism. As I have suggested, however, their turn towards tragedy produces art from an experience of coloniality that is framed by the residue of the first mode of colonialism that took place in the Americas. The result of their ideological and artistic projects is double-fold: their futures for race are productive in staging a time beyond the colony, but this time without formal colonial relations is itself dependent on the exclusion of contemporary Indians altogether.

While the colonial residue of MeXican theatre makes indigenous peoples the impossible subjects of a decolonial history of the present, my next set of chapters takes head-on a different form of art explicitly addressing the present derived from colonialism. My first two chapters study Usigli, Moraga and Magaña as three dramatists whose desire to know indigenous knowledge situates Indian peoples in the archive documenting

the scenes of colonial terror. In theorizing modern art, time, and history from the archives organized by colonial projects, their theatre does not acknowledge its collusion in relegating contemporary indigenous peoples to a time that no longer exists. To compliment their archival theatre, my next chapters –"Spectacular Indians: Antonin Artaud and the Cruelty of Latino Performance" and "Rehearsals of the Damned: Damnation, Freedom, Salvation"– study a set of dramatic art forms by playwrights, performance theorist and performance artists that theorize native subjects without turning to an archive of historical documents. Together, these next chapters argue that the time of performance art can articulate an indigenous subject that seeks to exceed the time of the archive and the tragedy of coloniality/modernity in the Americas. Sometimes performance also repeats the time of the archive and represents indigenous peoples as the impossible subjects of decolonial imaginaries. In other instances, performance art succeeds in transgressing the tragic time of damnation, and it does so dressed as an Indian strapped onto a woman's crotch.

PART II

THE INDIAN IN OTHER TIMES

CHAPTER 3

SPECTACULAR INDIANS: ANTONIN ARTAUD AND THE CRUELTY OF LATINO PERFORMANCE

To visit the Tarahumara is to enter a world which is incredibly anachronistic and exists in defiance of this age. As far as I am concerned, this is so much the worse for this age. So it is that the Tarahumara call themselves, feel themselves, believe themselves to be a Primeval Race, and they prove this to be true in every possible way. A Primeval Race: today no one remembers what this is, and if I had not seen the Tarahumara, I might well have believed that the expression contains a Myth. But in the Tarahumara Sierra many of the Great Ancient Myths come back to life.
— Antonin Artaud, *The Peyote Dance*

One Pueblo elder from Arizona who saw us in the Smithsonian went so far as to say that our display was more "real" than any other statement about the condition of Native peoples in the museum. "I see the faces of my grandchildren in that cage," he told a museum representative.
…
In Spain there were many complaints that our skin was not dark enough for us to be "real" primitives.
— Coco Fusco, *English is Broken Here*

Sadly, over 40 percent of our audience, no matter where we were, believed that the exhibit was real, and did not feel compelled to do anything about it.
— Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *The New World Border*

Two different imaginations of indigeneity were at play in the art of Antonin Artaud, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, three of the most influential artists of 20th-century modern art. In the former, Artaud's words express a nostalgia for a lost indigeneity that he (and the West) originally created for himself to rescue; after all, the world of the Tarahumara contains a Primeval Race that comes back to life and sets Artaud's modern time in anachronistic disarray.[1] In sharp contrast to this supposed anachronicity, the Latino performers' *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit*… (1992) was a critique of the persistent denial of indigenous peoples' coeval existence in the modern world: the Pueblo Indian sees his life and that of his progeny realistically reflected in the Latinos' exhibitions of race as spectacular displays of conquest, much to the detriment of the Spaniards who saw through the spectacularity of the staged event and called the brownface performance a farce.[2] The indigenous person witnessed the exhibition of bodies of color under captivity and saw his contemporary existence reflected back at him as one of unending colonialism; the Spaniards did not: the Indians in the cage were not real, colonialism had already ended. Nevertheless, for Artaud writing in the early 20th-century about modern

[1] The epigraph by Antonin Artaud is from *The Peyote Dance*, Trans. Helen Weaver. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976. Quote on page 7. Further citations from this text will be cited as *PD*.

[2] The epigraph by Coco Fusco is from *English is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas*. New York: The New Press, 1995. Quote on page 56.

Mexico as it was emerging from the remnants of its 1910 Revolution, and for the Latinos performing at the turn of the same century, colonialism is not dead: it is alive and well, and it keeps coming back to our life since 1492.

What is first evident between Artaud and the Latino performers is that the artists were thinking of indigeneity in opposing temporal terms: Artaud thought the Indians were living in a lost past and needed to be re-discovered now, and the Latinos knew the Indians had already been discovered and were living in public displays in the present. Their temporal divergence, however, does converge in their common enunciation of the 15th and 16th-century Conquest of the Americas in the 20th-century presents occupied by the artists and their work. Although the discourse surrounding both the author of Cruelty and the Latino performers has not addressed this ideological collusion, I suggest that these artists' places in the history of art are equally indebted to the colonial invention of indigenous people. In the early 1990s, Fusco and Gómez-Peña critiqued the Quincentenary celebrations by reproducing the 19th-century colonial exhibitions of people of color and displaying themselves inside a golden cage as "newly discovered Amerindians" in museums throughout the world. And for his part, Artaud credited the conquest of Mexico as the first act of his Theatre of Cruelty, his performance theory originally inspired by Balinese bodies under colonial rule

and afterwards tested out among Mexico's "Primeval Race" of the Tarahumara Indians in the 1930s. Artaud's writings from this period are also a serious critique of Europe's sense of modern exceptionality and its metaphysical sensibility dying during the interwar period. His critique came after the 1931 Colonial Exhibition in Paris, where he witnessed a performance with which to revive a dying Occident: the dancing "Asiatics" he claimed were uncontaminated by the ills of Western modernity. The art forms practiced by Artaud and the Latino performers, I argue, explicitly reveal the underside of modernity by exhibiting bodies of color for colonial consumption.

This ideological overlap in their performance art practices hinges on a cruelty of its own: when these artists create art inspired by conquest, Artaud's anti-colonial gaze and the Latinos' exhibition reveal an ideology of indigeneity that in actuality performs an erasure of indigenous' particular experience of colonialism. *Two Undiscovered Amerindians* attempted to induce the Latinos' mostly white audience groups to partake in their critique of the Quincentenary celebration of the indigenous genocide begun with the 1492 arrival of Christopher Columbus. "Sadly," as Gómez-Peña puts it, the majority of their audiences chose to not let them out of their cage and the

brown artists remained as the Indians literally bound by the Conquest. [3] The performers were able to construct an indigenous ethos for their audiences, much like the anthropologists and non-native artists that the Latino performers critique had done earlier to *their* consumers of culture and racial difference. When their illusion was able to pass for reality, Fusco and Gómez-Peña became a mimicry of these non-native and European "cultural transvestites" (Fusco's term for these other artists) who appropriated the culture of the Other for the sake of performance. Similar to Artaud's insistence on seeing the artifice as endowed with life, the Latinos' illusion of authentic indigeneity was created to critique the colonial tragedy affecting the lives of native people since 1492. When the illusion became conflated with the living human beings, their artifice of race erased the "real" Indian once again. In turn, Artaud and the theorists of his theatre of cruelty that came after he initially published *The Theatre and its Double* (1938) do not acknowledge nor adequately theorize his complicity with the colonization of the Balinese and the Tarahumara. Theatre of Cruelty was originally theorized after he became disillusioned with Europe's traditional theatre and following his encounter with Balinese dancers at the 1931 Colonial Exhibition, and yet in his writings on the exhibition he is hardly aware of his subjectivity as one

[3] The epigraph by Guillermo Gómez-Peña is from *The New World Border: Prophesies, Poems & Loqueras For the End of the Century*. San Francisco: City Lights, 1996. Quote on page 98.

more consumer of the colonial spectacle. After encountering the Balinese, he then travels to Mexico in search of an original subject of his theater among the Tarahumara, and his "first spectacle of the Theater of Cruelty [was] entitled *The Conquest of Mexico*."[4] Artaud's play was an uncritical reenactment of the fall of indigenous empires, and he rehearses this primitivistic view during his visit to the Primeval Race in the Land of the Tarahumara, the same race he wishes to bring back to life in the present. Artaud's cruelty and the cruelty of the Latinos' performance reach the same conclusion when their performances of race make Indians into an essence of spectacularity ready to be consumed by their audiences.

My chapter studies the ways in which these iterations of performance art inspired by the Conquest fail to adequately account for this own collusion in reproducing indigenous people's experiences with colonialism as framed within a tragic temporality: indigenous people live in the non-native artists' own time but their lives are contingent on a past that cannot be overcome. I argue that as a result of this temporal incongruence, the art of cruelty makes evident an ideology of indigeneity that runs counter to what Artaud, Fusco and Gómez-Peña expressed as their ideals in critically staging and

[4] Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, Trans. Mary Caroline Richards. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1958. Quote on page 126. Further citations from this text will be cited as *TD*.

performing cultural difference. The ideals of indigeneity espoused in their modern art are an impossible indigeneity because race in the present, as they attach it to an experience of colonialism originating in the 15th-century, cannot produce a decolonial future where racism and conquest are not the order of things. I contend that as events and ideologies falsifying indigeneity for the sake of art, Artaud's theatre of cruelty and the cruelty of Latino performance leave the living indigenous subjects frozen inside the cage of stereotypes and representations, always-already captive even by the individuals self-proclaimed as the most politically conscious of modern artists.

Colonizing Cruelty

Artaud's "Preface" to the 1938 first edition of *The Theater and Its Double* begins with a clear denunciation of European culture:

> Never before, when it is life itself that is in question, has there been so much talk of civilization and culture. And there is a curious parallel between this generalized collapse of life at the root of our present demoralization and our concern for a culture which has never been coincident with life, which in fact has been devised to tyrannize over life (*TD* 7).

He presents this discussion of civilization and culture as a type of crisis because he sees the "present demoralization and [their] concern for a culture" to be growing out of a "generalized collapse of life." In a matter of

few of words Artaud moves from discussing life in relation to "civilization and culture," to talking of "life" and "culture" as the two central concerns. Civilization as a social construct is replaced by human life, endowing the social and cultural with a live and living ability. The questions he wishes to address with *The Theater and Its Double*, then, are phenomenological in nature: what are culture and life if they "have] never been coincident[ial]" with each other? The crisis of the European man is based on a division between culture and life that sees the former as the tyrant of the latter, and the answer to this crisis lies in a reconfiguration of semantics: the social and the natural, culture and life, are to be resignified as identical. As he suggests, this solution lies in a redefinition of culture that is based not on "philosophical systems" (7) but on "a *presence of mind*":

> We must insist upon the idea of culture-in-action, of culture growing within us like a new organ, a sort of second breath; and on civilization as an applied culture controlling even our subtlest actions, a *presence of mind*; the distinction between culture and civilization is an artificial one, providing two words to signify an identical function (8, italics in the original).

Culture is to be understood as equated with life as much as civilization is, and "the distinction between culture and civilization is an artificial one" because the two "signify an identical function": life-as-action. Artaud's rhetorical move to resignify the meaning of life under a semantics of culture-in-action and civilization forces us to rethink our connection with everyday

sociality as a living form endowed with human consciousness. Culture as a conscious act is the answer to the problem with the philosophical systems leading people to "[think] in forms, signs [and] representations" empty of actual life (8).

The solution to the European crisis, however, turns radically critical when its initial demoralization and concern for culture are diagnosed as a type of colonizing illness. His diagnosis of the illness is worthy of full citation:

> Hence our confirmed lack of culture is astonished by certain grandiose anomalies; for example, on an island without any contact with modern civilization, the mere passage of a ship carrying only health passengers may provoke the sudden outbreak of diseases unknown on that island but a specialty of nations like our own: shingles, influenza, grippe, rheumatism, sinusitis, polyneuritis, etc.
>
> Similarly, if we think Negroes smell bad, we are ignorant of the fact that anywhere but in Europe it is we white who "smell bad." And I would even say that we give off an odor as white as the gathering of pus in an infected wound.
>
> As iron can be heated until it turns white, so it can be said that everything excessive is white; for Asiatics white has become the mark of extreme decomposition (*TD* 9).

Artaud's anticolonial best is a serious re-presentation of Europeans as disease-infested bodies lacking culture, and as bodies that "may provoke the sudden outbreak of [their] diseases" when they encounter people otherwise left untouched by Europe. His "island without any contact with modern civilization," on the other hand, is imagined as a (perhaps) pure body

precisely because it has been out of contact with what he names as modernity: "shingles, influenza, grippe, rheumatism, sinusitis, polyneuritis, etc." Modernity, for Artaud, is a disease that non-European countries are to avoid at all costs if they do not want contamination by "the gathering of pus in an infected wound" of all Europeans. The crisis of the European man also includes the ignorance "that anywhere but in Europe it is [he] who 'smell[s] bad," not "the Negroes" he has already encountered and, I am left to assume, already infected. These "Negroes [who] smell bad" became the subjects on whose bodies modernity was built as a result of the deadly colonial encounter between Africa and Europe. If this forsaken meeting made the Africans slaves to the masters of the Transatlantic trade, then their rotten bodies on board the slave ships smelled of the racial stench originally given off by their white masters. The latter did not realize that their European bodies were culturally dying before they came to infect the formers' bodies with their Western modernity. Of course, Artaud himself is partaking in the trade's discourse when he reproduces these Black subjects as the Negroes carrying a stench rather than writing of them outside of the discourse of racism, even if he does point his finger back on himself and his fellow European men.

The most interesting aspect of Artaud's words is the singularity he attributes to "Asiatics" who have learned "that everything excessive is white," and that "white has become the mark of extreme decomposition" (*TD* 9). Presumably, these Asiatics have learned to recognize "the gathering of pus in an infected wound" when they see it, avoiding contamination with European men and their modernity in the process. The physical survival of these Asiatics —if Europe is a body, so is Asia— lies in their relinquishing of a desire to encounter modernity, and staying out of modernity's way for the sake of preserving their own health. Artaud seems to suggest that, lest they want to end up smelling like black corpses, the Asiatics should resist cultural decomposition as the defining element of the West's dying whiteness. He privileges Asia's racial difference, itself created in opposition to the Occident, and insists that Asia holds the key to resisting the expansion of the infected wound.

It is in this anticolonial and Orientalist context that Artaud begins to theorize his Theater of Cruelty centered around the ideas of culture-as-act and that "everything that acts is a cruelty" (*TD* 85). His essay on "The Theater and Cruelty" argues that the development of theater has lagged behind that of the film industry and other sources of entertainment for the public, such as "the music hall or the circus" (84). While he acknowledges

that these new cultural outlets exceed the impact of theater, he also states that these outlets have failed to fully engage the audience: "At this point of deterioration which our sensibility has reached, it is certain that we need above all a theater that wakes us up: nerves and heart" (84). Theater production for Artaud is a process that should convert the viewing public from simple consumers of culture, who attend those other outlets out of a desire for pure entertainment, into subjects fully embedded and awakened from those outlets deteriorating their senses. If the philosophical systems of the European man's dying modernity rotated around notions of logic versus reason, psychology versus spirituality, and mind over body, cruelty was reversing the order of these equations to situate the metaphysical as equal to the physical. Life as he wanted it was entirely made up of both nerves and heart, the very things culture was to access through theater if it were to affect social change.

The importance of this new type of theater is rooted in the historical specificity giving rise to the audiences' affective sphere:

> In the anguished, catastrophic period we live in, we feel an urgent need for a theater which events do not exceed, whose resonance is deep within, dominating the instability of the times (*TD* 84).

Like the need to fully engage the audiences through their nerves and heart, what seemed to be most innovative in his revamping of theater then was a

turn towards the audiences' emotions: theater must now "resona[te] deep within [them]." The turn towards emotional responses to the stage is meant as a way to engage what is going on outside of the stage, since his theater must be that "which events do not exceed" and which "dominat[es] the instability of the time." The theater that Artaud is proposing is meant to exist at the same level of reality as the happenings of human life events, and this is because he is calling for a theater that engages the audience as part of the production as much as they are participants in the everyday: "Everything that acts is a cruelty. It is upon this idea of extreme action, pushed beyond all limits, that theater must be rebuilt" (85). Theatre of Cruelty is anchored "the anguished, catastrophic period we live in," but when real life tragedies are staged, the art of cruelty exceeds the value of historical location. Cruelty is completely undivided from reality, and with both the real life events and the theatrical productions made of the same human life essence, anything and "everything that [is action] is a cruelty" (85). While this is an innovative revolution for theater practices, it can become a devaluation of the real for the sake of the artifice: acts of cruelty or violence may (or may not) be engaged willingly, as in, say, oppressive regimes disappearing innocent or subversive victims or leaving newly discovered indigenous people trapped inside a cage. In short, since the art of cruelty is meant to be part of same

order as human life, Artaud's theater erases any ethical responsibility from the part of the producers and performers to question or explain the social order naturalizing histories of violence.

What is at stake in the Theatre of Cruelty is the recreation of a particular life and reality through the theatrical stage, since "it is in this spectacle of temptation [that] life has everything to lose and the mind everything to gain" (*TD* 87). The mind has everything to gain through the production of this new theater that takes material from real life. To achieve this mode of being, the spectator and her emotions must be mobilized:

> It is in order to attack the spectators' sensibility on all sides that we advocate a revolving spectacle which, instead of making the stage and auditorium two closed worlds, without possible communication, spreads its visual and sonorous outbursts over the entire mass of the spectators… Words say little to the mind; extent and objects speak; new images speak, even new images made with words. But space thundering with images and crammed with sounds speaks too, if one knows how to intersperse from time to time sufficient extent of space stocked with silence and mobility (86-87).

The traditional proscenium stage creates a rigid division between the actors and the spectators of the performances, and this prevents any sort of dialogue between the actors, their actions, and their audiences. As a result, the audience is left to engage the act only at the individual level without the need for the performance to affect it deliberately. The stage of Theatre of Cruelty invades the privacy of the audience's reality by erasing the barrier of

the traditional stage. "In order to attack the spectator's sensibility on all sides" and prevent it from deterioration, the space where spectator and actor meet must be constructed with a different idea in mind (84). The traditional stage creates a vertical division with the audience looking down or up at the actors, but to enclose the spectator within a reality of her own, this division of space must give way to a new one where the space of interaction allows for dialogue and communication. The space of the stage in theater of cruelty is what creates the conditions for replicating a cruel performance that usurps the place of the real. By embedding the theater space with new symbols and objects —in short, with a new a language—, the stage of cruelty becomes a semantic space "thundering with images and crammed with sounds," unlike the traditional one where meaning is left to float above the spectator. The space of the stage, like real life, contains a language for communication and the dissemination of messages with spectators as subjects of address.

The origin of Theater of Cruelty and its take on the spectators' affective responses to performance does not lay in its reworking of space or emotions, but in the bodies of the a particular group of non-European dancers he watched perform at the 1931 Colonial Exposition held in Paris. In his incisive study on Artaud and the Balinese dancers, Nicola Savarese (2001) highlights the history of the artist's review of the performance,

rewritten several times before it was published in its final form as "On the Balinese Theater." His review of the 1931 exhibition of the Balinese was the first essay to be written for *The Theater and Its Double*, with "Oriental and Western Theater" as the last essay written shortly before he went to Mexico in 1936. However, the subsequent publications and translations of the book include the essay on the Balinese dancers in a different non-chronological order. Mary Caroline Richard's 1958 translation of the book, for example, includes "On the Balinese Theater" as the fourth essay in *The Theater and Its Double*, before "Oriental and Western Theater" and the series of essays and letters on his Theater of Cruelty. Savarese suggests that "without even taking into consideration the chronological order of the writing of the texts in *Theater and Its Double*, it is not difficult to understand that Artaud's contribution to the development of a theatrical language of Occidental theatre as it was then understood, is synthetically contained in that first review of Balinese theater" (52). Artaudian cruelty begins as an act of cruelty of his own: he positively reviews the exhibition of colonized peoples when he begins by applauding the Balinese and their form of dance, so different from the one he was used to seeing in Europe:

> The spectacle of the Balinese theater, which draws upon dance, song, pantomine—and a little of the theater as we understand it in the Occident—restores the theater, by means of ceremonies of indubitable age and well-tried efficacy, to its original destiny

> which it presents as a combination of all these elements fused together in a perspective of hallucination.
> …
> Here indeed situations are only a pretext. The drama does not develop as a conflict of feelings but as a conflict of spiritual states, themselves ossified and transformed into gestures—diagrams (*TD* 53).

What attracted Artaud to this Balinese form of dance was the actors' ability to transform "a conflict of spiritual states" into bodily "gestures—diagrams," a performance that produced meaning on the stage by translating the metaphysical into the physical realm. He saw in their performance the key to solving the crisis of the European man, because in their cultural practices the Balinese were able to create a diagram "where everything, conception and realization alike, has value, has existence only in proportion to its degree of objectification *on the stage*" (53, emphasis in the original). If the European man had not encountered the Asiatics who managed to avoid contagion, Artaud found the cure for Western modernity's sickly body in the cultural forms he thought were untouched by modernity.

The medicine for a dying Europe that Artaud found in the Balinese dancers was dependent on the exhibition of the Balinese as colonial subjects of the very body he thought they could cure. Artaud had to encounter Bali and Balinese culture as objects made for exhibition, but this form of colonial exchange was lost on him. According to Günter Ahrends, when Artaud

attended the Balinese show he decided that "from that performance… derived the deep conviction that the theatre was able not only to conjure up the magic potency Western Culture had lost in the course of time, but also to create myths capable of releasing the irrational powers of man which had been suppressed by the forces of civilization" (1994, 4). Indeed, as Savarese suggests, the question that is hardly addressed concerning this colonial exchange is: "what did this first exposure to the Balinese dancers, obliged to exhibit themselves to please their Dutch masters who had transformed the Sunda Islands into a "nation of coolies,' mean to [Artaud]?" (Savarese 2001, 53). Following the work of I Made Bandem and Frederick E. De Boer's work on Balinese dance, he states that "the dances of the Bali can in fact be classified according to the 'hierarchy of the places' where they are performed, a value scale which does not have to do with the techniques or contents of the dances but rather starts with dances performed in the 'most sacred' place and descends to those dances performed furthest from the 'most sacred' place and hence 'lower'" (68). The sacred dances start out in the innermost courtyard of the temple and conclude with the dances performed for tourists. When this order of sanctity and public ritual is applied to the dances in the Balinese performed in 1931, we can see that the repertoire of their dances in Paris did not include those that took place

inside their temples. Following the description of the dance that Artaud provides in the opening of his essay "On the Balinese Theater," the dance that he witnessed was the janger,[5] one of the least sacred of Balinese repertoire. The first dance he saw so impressed him that he opens his review essay by referencing it, but this dance was in fact not the most sacred nor was it "part of a great tradition of ancient dances and [was] purely 'recreational'" (68). It wasn't the religious or cultural value that made an impression on Artaud, but rather "the dancers themselves… the art of the performers, their powerful scenic presence" (68). When the actors' manipulated their physical energy in their dancing displays, Artaud saw "the source of the life of the theatre" (68).

Savarese argues that Artaud's anticolonial intentions be seen in his insistence "to renew Occidental theatre but also to change completely the

[5] Although there is no factual evidence with which to decipher what dance Artaud saw, Savarese compares his description of the event with the actual dances performed by the Balinese Theater to figure out what exactly it was that he saw at the Exposition. Artaud describes the dance as: "It is very remarkable that the first of the little plays which compose this spectacle, in which we are shown a father's remonstrances to his tradition-flouting daughter, begins with an entrance of phantoms; the male and female characters who will develop a dramatic but familiar subject appear to us first in their aspect and are seen in that hallucinatory perspective appropriate to every theatrical character" (*TD* 53). Savarese describes the janger as "composed by a group of young dancers at the beginning of the '20s and performed by them for many years, is a kind of danced and spoken drama that takes the form of a square made up of two lines of female dancers and two lines of male dancers, facing each other. This square is the chorus, which surrounds the other actors. In the center of the square is the dagg, a master of ceremonies who recites the story while the younger dancers around him sing the refrain. The story told can be one of many types, according to the village or the group that is performing it" (Savarese 2001, 68).

culture on which it was based," and that his ambition drove "[his] return to the sources, to magical and primitive thought, to myths distant from Occidental rationality that separates words from things" (Savarese 2001, 71). Furthermore, he says, "for Artaud, exoticism no longer represented, as it had done for 19th-century artists, a moment of friction with the familiar order but provided a way to react against the beautiful, the normal, of the Occident. Thus, even by means of the exoticism of Balinese dances seen in the pavilions of a colonial exhibition, the idea of a different kind of theatre could grow… And [that] a lost theatre is discovered." Indeed, Artaud himself was positioned as the ideal subject for his own theatre at that 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition: the Balinese stage made him a spectator of a performance that moved him by striking at his nerves and heart. His response was to resist colonialism's and modernity's illnesses by appropriating the exhibition of colonial subjects as his own.

I would suggest, however, that the link enacted between affect, performance and colonialism at that exact moment in history is overlooked in Savarese's argument. Even if Artaud wasn't repeating the 19th-century exoticism practiced by European artists, his theory is still derived from his observation of a non-European art form and a people whose bodies were put on display for the sake of colonial consumption. He may not have

consciously reproduced this colonialism, but he was driven by an almost innate desire to posses the exotic otherness of those he watched as one more spectator in the crowd. Their bodies under exhibition excited his colonizing gaze and inspired him to theorize a different theatre to re-innervate what was no longer beautiful or normal in the West. And while the ideal spectator of cruelty is not meant to be a mindless consumer, Artaud evidently made no mental note of the Asian bodies as colonial subjects forced to dance on stage for him. His own subjectivity consisted of a consumption made possible through a project of colonialism.

Artaud distorted what he saw on the Balinese stage, and his distortion actually gave the theatre he felt Europe needed to revive its dying culture a new healthy living body. As European empires moved closer to the eve of their demise with World War II, Artaud saw in the residues of colonialism (the Exposition) and its peoples subjugated to perform for their dying masters the very essence needed to revive European culture. The theater that he believed Europe had lost in the process of becoming modern was discovered in the essence of the Asiatic he himself invented, and its essence was made a body and religious practice by the Exposition. Indeed, "the Balinese performances represented for Artaud something very different from what they actually were, but something nevertheless necessary to him"

(Savarese 2001, 71). To the Balinese, however, this particular essence of theater was not lost at all; they had no theatre to rediscover because it was they who were creating art —did they call it "theatre," as Savarese and Artaud do?— right then and there.

In the end, Savarese concludes that Balinese culture resists ethnocentric and colonial visions of what Balinese culture is or ought to be. To quote at him at length, he says that

> Balinese dance is a living form that grows and changes as those who are its interpreters live and change. Thus the Balinese world, which seemed to Artaud to be remote and archaic, a kind of quintessence of primitivism, was in fact not at all isolated from the cultural flow of the time and was, on the contrary, alive and active, preserving its traditions but also open, more than is generally thought, to change…
>
> Far from being, as some scholars claim, an attack on cultural authenticity or signs of a collapse of Balinese culture, these exchanges… reveal instead the profound vitality of the Balinese culture, which did not, and does not, accept either a 'reservation' mentality nor the limits of white colonization attempted to impose on it—a resistance similar to Artaud's resistance in Paris to the spread of a conformist theatre. It is therefore strange that today, just as in years past, in the name of a purity inconsistent with the alchemy of cultural processes—from behind flag-waving sincerity peeks ethnocentrism, once again—it is precisely the main scholars and admirers of Bali who lament the loss of a paradise. Artaud put it well: the Occident is the land of white tombs.
>
> In 1931, the Balinese in Bali, Artaud in Paris—weaving the threads of change for a theatre of the future, not the impossible tapestry of a lost paradise (Savarese 2001, 74-85).

Following Savarese, Artaud's inspiration resulting from the primitivism he projected onto the Balinese dancers did not mean much in terms of the actual "alive and active" Balinese world that "was not at all isolated from the cultural flow of the time." The temporal-scape of primitivism in which Artaud situated the Balinese sacred dances put them beyond the time of the West, regardless of the cultural flow of time shared by both Artaud and the Balinese colonial subjects. Artaud's temporal vision was an ideology of time that divided the time of the dying modernity from the time of an un-modern East not yet contaminated by the West, never mind colonialism. Savarese isn't critical of Artaud for his colonizing tendencies, and his is an attempt to understand how these actually aided him in the process of theorizing Theatre of Cruelty for the sake of the future. Even if he is very conscious of these colonial fetishes, it's almost as if any attempt at critiquing Artaud for partaking in the colonization of the Balinese would run the risk of being labeled as ethnocentric as "the main scholars and admirers of Bali who lament the loss of a paradise." I agree that it is indeed very possible to turn towards ethnocentrism to recreate yet another "pure" essence of the Balinese untouched by the West, and that such ethnocentrism would not provide us with a more productive lens to understand "the alchemy of cultural processes." Still, I would argue that our studies of theatre in the East

and West also cannot ignore the overlap in Artaud and other anti-colonial ethnocentrics in using the rhetoric of loss. Artaud turns to the Balinese to find Europe's lost cultural life in Bali's sacred arts, precisely the same sacred practices that Balinese ethnocentrics could see as potentially lost under colonialism. Granted that each of these losses mean a different essence for both parties, the same questions apply: what is the purpose of creating a Balinese essence (un)touched by Western modernity, and what happens to the Balinese in each of their projects? For Artaud, the answer was clear: "even by means of the exoticism of Balinese dances seen in the pavilions of a colonial exhibition, the idea of a different kind of theatre could grow: theatre replaces dance, words are replaced by living hieroglyphs. And a lost theatre is discovered" (71). For the Balinese dancers under the colonizing artist's gaze, their bodies were turned into living objects imbued with new signification.

As part of the 1931 Colonial Exposition, the Balinese performers rarely left their "exhibition grounds[,] rendering them prisoners," and when they did leave their staged habitat, their publics made them walking protagonists of the colonial show (Savarese 2001, 63). The Balinese performers, regardless of their specific location at the exposition, could not escape the colonial status written all over their bodies made a spectacle for

the Parisian public's consumption. Just as they couldn't count on being recognized as something other than a walking show by their European spectators, "the one thing upon which they could always count, on the other hand, was the obedience they were required to show toward their white masters" (63). They were also "not only required to perform at the Paris Exposition but, as representatives of the Dutch East Indies, they were requested to travel first to the Netherlands, to pay their respects to their sovereign, as part of a tour which included Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague" (65). The colonial power of the Dutch was written on the Balinese human bodies, which were needed to be provided as proof and representation of the extent of such power; there would be no colonialism without the bodies there to materialize the signification of Dutch imperial sovereignty. The very essence that Artaud needed to bring a new theater to life was embodied in the colonized, the very embodiment that Theatre of Cruelty seeks to create itself around. Like its erasure of material life for the sake of living art forms, the aesthetic of Artaud's cruelty also erased the colonization of Asian bodies performing in chains of bondage right before the artist's eyes. In 1931, the Balinese exhibited for Artaud in colonial Paris were not being weaved into a tapestry of a lost paradise, but into the theatre of a future where colonialism is till the practice of everyday life.

The Cruelty of Latinidad

This exploitation of bodies of color, made into collections of living objects for the sake of Western art forms, is at the center of the cruelty enacted by Latino performance art. When Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña first decided to create a performance that critiqued the 1992 celebrations, they turned to a centuries-old practice that made use of a particular space to educate European and Euro-American audiences encountering bodies of a different race and ethnicity for the first time: the cages holding the natives of Africa, Asia and the Américas as objects to be exhibited. For Fusco, this began in the 16th-century, when "an Arawak [was] brought back from the Caribbean by Columbus [and] left on display in the Spanish Court for two year until he [died] of sadness," and when "'aboriginal samples' of people from [world parts outside of Europe] were brought to Europe [and the United States] for aesthetic contemplation, scientific analysis, and entertainment" throughout the 19th-century (Fusco 1995, 41). The experiences of those people on display were left out of the pages of history other than the notes of individuals, anthropologists and show-goers who wrote down their data of the objects under study. Their experiences under colonial subjugation and scientific analysis are reduced to an archive of erasure: they simply do not exist as part of the written record

because they weren't meant to read, write or speak themselves, rather their bodies were there to be seen, read, written and spoken for. It was against this archive of silence and the archive of the colonial order of things that the Latino artists willingly "perform[ed] the role of a noble savage behind the bars of a golden cage" (37).

Fusco and Gómez-Peña first came to the international public spotlight in the early 1990s with *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit*… (1992), their performance that critiqued the centuries-old tradition of exhibiting non-western peoples at events like the 1931 Colonial Exposition.[6] As part of their Guatinaui World Tour, they exhibited themselves in museums pretending to be the last survivors of an indigenous tribe "from an island in the Gulf of Mexico that had somehow been overlooked by Europeans for five centuries. [They] called [their] homeland Guatinau, and [themselves] Guatinauis" (Fusco 1995, 39).[7] The performance itself was a moving museum exhibit and part of the Edge Foundation's 1992 Biennial celebrations taking place in cities from London and Sydney to the

[6] It should be noted that both Fusco and Gómez-Peña had created other performance art pieces and published works before this particular performance began to receive such wide-ranching attention. For example, Gómez-Peña's 1991 video-performance, *Border Brujo*, is by now considered a classic of Latina/o art, and Fusco's career began in the late 1980s, having directed and produced the video documentary *Havana Postmodern: The New Cuban Art* for public television broadcasting in 1987.

[7] For Gómez-Peña, the term "Guatinau" is the "Spanglishization of 'what now'" (Gómez-Peña 1996, 39, 97).

Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. As previous studies of the performance and the performers themselves have stated, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians* aimed at calling into question the commemoration of the 1492 discovery of the Americas.[8] While in 1992 Christopher Columbus' discovery was being honored with parades, Hollywood films and documentaries, it was simultaneously redeemed for having begun the genocide of indigenous peoples the moment the European eye encountered that of the natives'. In direct contestation to this uncritical reception of colonialism, the artists decided to mimic these public spectacles by restaging the Conquest as a reminder of the racist politics behind the Quincentenary Celebrations: if these spectacles in honor of Columbus took joy in remembering the Encounter *only* as the moment when the Old World came to civilize this New World without giving credence to the annihilation of the majority of this area's inhabitants, then through their traveling cage the Latino performers brought to life the figure of the native produced and silenced at this initial moment of violence.

However, the original concept of the Latinos' counter-Quincentenary project did not foretell that "a substantial portion of the public believed that

[8] Diana Taylor's "A Savage Performance: Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco's 'Couple in Cage'" (1998), her essay on the documentary video of the performance, was perhaps the first extensive critical study on this performance. See Taylor (1998, 2003) and Kelly (1999).

[their] fictional identities were real ones" (Fusco 1995, 37). Fusco and Gómez-Peña pretended to be real indigenous people in order to make their audiences recognize the continuous colonization of racialized bodies, but as they carried out the performance their subversive message simply became part of the very ideals they were aiming to critique. As Gómez-Peña's words suggest, ideally the artists wanted someone to free them from the cage and let those being exhibited take their place among the spectators as subjects not made for observation. Instead, a large number of their non-native audiences failed to understand the satirical nature of their politicized performance and left the Indians imprisoned behind bars. When they displayed themselves in Spain, the brownface performance presented as truthful failed because the stereotype of dark-skinned natives did fit the caged light-skinned Indians who did not pass the authenticity test. In contrast, the response from the native peoples in their U.S. audiences largely departed from that of their white counterparts. The Pueblo elder's remark in the epigraph speaks to the message of the performance: indigenous people are still being objectified and dehumanized 500 years after the Encounter, so the majority of the audiences of color got the message while others did not. In the end, the answer remained the same: the Indians were left behind bars and people of color were further sequestered into the role of the colonized

their audiences were seeing act as natives. With the two left imprisoned as their exhibition/exposition ended, their performance became not so much a reversal of a colonizing practice as much as an iteration of multiple projects ultimately working against the native produced at the original moment of cruelty and violence in the Américas. The Latino performance, I argue, ended up reenacting the indigenous racial subject enslaved in the Conquest and frozen in a time inaccessible outside of the modern present.

Faced with the spread of multiculturalism in the 1980s and 1990s as the answer to "the race problem" in the United States, as well as the 1992 celebration of the first intercultural relation, they became "intrigued by this legacy of performing an identity of an Other for a white audience, sensing its implications for [them] as performance artists dealing with cultural identity in the present" (Fusco 1995, 37). Much like Artaud's claim to situate theater of cruelty within a historical reality, the Latino performers also locate the need for their performance as an answer to the political turmoil affecting them. The answer to their problems could be sought out using performance as tools to create social change:

> We looked to Latin America, where consciousness of the repressive limits on public expression is far more acute than it is here, and found many examples of how popular opposition has for centuries been expressed through the use of satiric spectacle. Our cage became a metaphor for our condition, linking the racism implicit in ethnographic paradigms of

> discovery with the exoticizing rhetoric of 'world beat' multiculturalism. (39).

The performers looked to the Américas in order to critically "examine the limits of the 'happy multiculturalism' that reigned in cultural institutions" throughout the U.S., where "formalists and cultural relativists [rejected] the proposition that racial difference is absolutely fundamental to aesthetic interpretation" (39). In situating their performance within a framework that imagines the Américas as a hemisphere marked by colonialism, the artists also position their work as part a theatre and performance tradition belonging strictly *in* and *to* the hemisphere. It is the historical use of the spectacle-as-satire to express popular opposition that Fusco and Gómez-Peña re-engage as two more members and practitioners of performance art for the sake of radical politics of social change. Tapping into the history of colonialism and the history of performance strategically positioned their politics of performance and the performance itself within a genealogy of popular resistance. These U.S. Latinos, by their gesture of looking outside the U.S. and into Latin America for the possibility of using performance art as a tool for change, become imbedded within a cultural politics imagining the body of the hemispheric Américas as a moving stage.

When Columbus first brought a native of the Américas to Europe as an object of exhibition and as evidence of the lack of civilization of the

ontologically inferior being, he marked the beginning of a process representing the Américas as a place that could be imagined as a homogenous and categorical entity. The Américas as a hemisphere was reduced to the body of the Arawak native, who himself was reduced to a thing that was below the humanity of his capturers. Fusco and Gómez-Peña, in turning to Latin America for inspiration, engage this legacy of dehumanization through their performance and reveal the underbelly of the Quincentenary celebrations of Columbus' acts of cruelty. As part of the performance, "[Gómez-Peña] was dressed as a kind of Aztec wrestler from Las Vegas, and Coco as a Taina straight out of *Gilligan's Island*. [The two] were hand-fed by fake museum docents, and taken to the bathroom on leashes. Taxonomic plates describing [their] costumes and physical characteristics were displayed next to the cage" (Gómez-Peña 1996, 97). Mixing objects stereotypically representing modern and pre-modern times, their costumes and stage settings were aimed at creating a satire of the Quincentenary: "[They] performed [their] 'traditional tasks,' which ranged from sewing voodoo dolls and lifting weights to watching television and working on a laptop… for a small fee, [Fusco] would dance (to rap music), Guillermo would tell authentic Amerindian stories (in a nonsensical language), and we would pose for Polaroids with visitors" (Fusco 1995, 39).

The performance was a parody contrasting stereotypical images of what indigenous people did —make voodoo dolls and speak in nonsensical non-European language— with images of what "everyone else" did —use modern technology and listen to modern-day music. The performers' act of mimicry brought to the forefront the inherent contradiction in celebrating indigenous people as existing in a time far distant from ours regardless of the fact that the indigenous do indeed exist in the present.

The purpose of the performance was also to attempt to locate the moment where the discovery of the New World, and the clash of cultures this entailed, was made synonymous with multiculturalism then and now: "Our project concentrated on the 'zero degree' of intercultural relations in an attempt to define a point of origin for the debates that link 'discovery' and 'otherness'" (Fusco 1995, 39). Fusco's words suggest that the intercultural relations at play in 1992 were in actuality rehearsing the earlier mode of relationality where non-natives first dismissed the indigenous from the realm of human relations. When the white audiences refused to see the Latinos' spectacular performance as a political critique, fed them bananas and left them imprisoned, the audiences' behavior towards the brown artists was a mode of anti-relationality. Rather than recognizing the Indians in the cage as humans who ought to be free, their anti-relational behavior rehearsed

the colonial encounter that first invented the Indians' ontological difference. In turn, by denying human relationality to the Indians in the cage, the audiences' treated the performance as simply one more Quincentenary celebration resurrecting Christopher Columbus' colonial violence. The discoverer's violence was unconsciously celebrated the moment that the audiences cognitively recognized the artists as inhuman, since his 1492 initiation of indigenous genocide also sparked the inspiration for audiences' spectacular event. The encounter between Columbus and the natives became a spectacle through the celebrations, films, parades, etc., staged throughout the U.S. and Spain, but the encounter also became spectacular as a form of entertainment designed to override the memory of violence with distraction. The audiences of these celebratory performances were distracted from the significance of that original spectacle, and were distanced from feeling any remorse for being actively participant in their dissemination of colonialism. As audience members consuming the Quincentenary events, these people were active participants of a project of intercultural relations haunted by that first moment of anti-relationality in the Américas, so their collusion with colonialism makes their participation in any intercultural project a derivative of conquest.

For Fusco and Gómez-Peña, then, the distancing of the audience and the spectacle from a political understanding of performance-as-conquest necessitates critical attention that can attempt to understand the move from discovery and its multiple iterations to the Otherness produced from these repetitions. The Quincentenary celebrations, as Artaud would put it, were theatres actively deteriorating the audiences' political consciousness of the colonial practices they rehearsed when they celebrated 1492/1992. In order to understand their audiences' drive to enact conquest when encountering the body of racial and ethnic difference, Fusco and Gómez-Peña recreated the conditions whereby the audiences encountered this body, but with a twist: the white audiences were the ones being observed now. The Latino performers were not mimicking their and 16th and 19th-century counterparts when they resurrected their experiences from the grave of the ethnographers' notes; rather, their strategic caging of difference reversed the role of the body being manipulated by the exhibitors of museums. It is the European and white audiences who are now on display, and their ethnographers tracking their behavior and racial and ethnic difference are now the non-white bodies making a spectacle out of their fear of the non-white.

In essence, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians* was a spectacle of whiteness:

> The performance was interactive, focusing less on what we did than on how people interacted with us and interpreted our actions… we chose not to announce the event through prior publicity or any other means, when it was possible to exert such control; we intended to create a surprise or "uncanny" encounter, one in which audiences had to undergo their own process of reflection as to what they were seeing… In such encounters with the unexpected, peoples' defense mechanisms are less likely to operate with their normal efficiency; caught off guard, their beliefs are more likely to rise to the surface (Fusco 1995, 40).

By creating an environment where they could no longer differentiate fantasy from reality, the spectacle of whiteness was created by tapping into the fears of the non-native spectators. What Fusco and Gómez-Peña "want[ed] [was] to make out of theater a believable reality which gives the heart and the senses that kind of concrete bite which all true sensation requires" (*TD* 85). For these spectators, the theater they were witnessing and consuming was now a reality that included them as well, and that reality, this theater of cruelty, was strictly rooted in colonialism. The performers were able to manipulate them so as to force them into thinking critically about their position as consumers of an oppressive culture rooted in colonial practices, and as potential colonizers-in-the-making. However, the defense mechanisms confronted by the artists did not lead to the audiences' accepting their gift of critical self-consciousness. The audiences left them in their cage out of a fear spanning from the first moment of anti-relationality,

which was the only option that the Latinos gave them as an example of a social order. After all, the artists did not tell them they wanted to be let out, but their performance did consciously put them in a position of power: to objectify what the human is in order to reduce their responsibility as ethical beings, and this allowed them as an audience to retreat into a place of power over the monstrous thing they feared so much. Since the actors were already presenting themselves as the inhuman beings objectified for the sake of observation, they were quite literally the monsters and beasts the non-natives thought the natives were in the 16th-century. The spectators reduced the human character of the caged people of color so their difference could be contained safely distant from their own space of reality, but because they were able to easily project their power onto the couple in the cage, this reality created by the performers lost its illusionary effect. While Fusco and Gómez-Peña wished to show their white audiences the violence inflicted on bodies of color to this day, educating them on their unethical participation in the spread of colonialism, what they ended up getting was an audience all too-ready to play the role of the colonizer. As Gómez-Peña "sadly" states, "over 40 percent of [their] audience, no matter where [they] were, believed that the exhibit was real, and did not feel compelled to do anything about it with" (Gómez-Peña 1996, 98). The performers themselves erase the

difference between spectacle and reality, much like Artaud desired, when they appeal to the fears of an audience empowered by the theater of cruelty to become part of the illusion. This relational distance between the non-native humans and the non-human natives literalized by the golden cage is what constitutes the theater of cruelty.

Cruelty for the Latino performers, however, unlike Artaud's, did implicate a very real effect/affect because it also implicated the performers as subjected to the event: the white audiences' negative emotions were theatricalized through the traveling cage where they were confronted with what they found most disturbing, and these disturbing performers were indeed also subjected to feeling made Other, even though their deliberate lies did not expect it. For the performers, or at least for Coco Fusco as the woman of color held captive behind the bars of the cage, they were made to feel different and inferior regardless of the lack of authenticity of their actions. Fusco's body, as well as Gómez-Peña's, became "the site of colonial desire and fantasy... entrenched in contemporary society, regardless of present-day multi-culturalism initiatives or the onslaught of global philosophies" proclaiming a post-racial era (Vercone 2000, 90). The cruelty behind the objectification of non-Western and non-white human beings is alive and well even through the aestheticized and surreal event. The

performance made the dehumanization of brown bodies a very real effect not only through the white spectators who all too easily stepped into the role of the colonizing audiences of the previous centuries, but also because the performers themselves were unable to break out of the cage as metaphor for the containment of difference.

Racial Speech Acts

For Fusco and Gómez-Peña, the exhibitions of non-white bodies taking place throughout the last five centuries was a racial and racist practice lasting from medieval times to the present:

> Those people from other parts of the world were forced first to take the place that Europeans had already created for the savages of their own Medieval mythology; later with the emergence of scientific rationalism, the "aborigines" on display served as proof of the natural superiority of European civilization, of its ability to exert control over and extract knowledge from the "primitive" world, and ultimately of the genetic inferiority of non-European races (Fusco 1995, 41).

Fusco's argument parallels what Walter Mignolo (1995) has theorized as the darker side of the Renaissance: behind Medieval ideals of world cartography and the Renaissance's cultural rebirth, there was a colonial underbelly dehumanizing those people inhabiting the places beyond European imagination. This darker side makes itself present today as the experience of coloniality that Fusco theorizes. The exhibitions created a number of speech

acts leading to the creation of various events that were part of a larger social system spreading well beyond the boundaries of the cages holding non-native bodies captive. In the first iteration establishing the ethnographic practices that accompanied the spread of colonialism, the exhibitions themselves actively participated in reflecting and helping spread the evolution of racial thought in both Europe and the United States from Medieval mythology to Darwinism. And in the second iteration with the Latino performance, the exhibitions of Coco Fusco and Gómez-Peña reflect back the lasting effects of these racial ideologies on the contemporary moment.

The most important or relevant act produced by the exhibitions was the clarification that 500 years after 1492, the spectacles of whiteness and racial difference produced during the event of the Conquest were still alive and well. The Latinos' exhibitions created a speech act through their constructions of race-as-visual: while formal racist projects seeking to give credence to the idea that non-whites are inferior to whites have ended (ie. eugenics movements), non-white bodies are continuously looked upon as less than human. For the audiences, this particular speech act consolidated their belief in whites' racial superiority over the non-white and non-Europeans; and, subsequently, it reduced native audiences to mere spectacles

of barbarity and events to be consumed. In essence, the Latinos on exhibition were an event replicated the speech act of the Conquest: the Requerimiento establishing the right of the conquistadors to tell the natives they were heathens in need of conversion and enslavement, dehumanizing them in the name of Christ and European imperial expansion. If the spread of Christianity through colonialism systematically spread the construction of whiteness each time the Requerimiento was pronounced and the natives turned into monstrous pagans, then this dynamic was reiterated each time the non-natives caged the other for the sake of "[giving] credence to white supremacist worldviews by representing nonwhite peoples and cultures as being in need of discipline, civilization, and industry" (Fusco 1995, 41). Like the original moment of encounter, the Latinos' tapping into that zero degree of relationality was consolidated through the act of colonizing speech dictating the caged natives as uncivilized barbarians. As products of their performance's racial speech act, the experiences of Fusco and Gómez-Peña as people of color are what crossed the line between 1492/1992 and a contemporary U.S. that was inherently tied to that original moment of multiculturalism.

In his critical essay on the work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Juan Velasco (2002) argues that the artist's performance history goes "as far back

as the colonial past when the notion of 'Indian' was created as an empty signifier… [but] the particularities of [his work with Fusco] shape also the reenactments of the 'modern' Other: 'the dangerous border crossers'" (209). The performance serves to critique the 1992 celebrations, but also the treatment of migrants as a dangerous threat to U.S. national cohesion. Jennifer Drake (2001) also makes a direct connection between the Latino performance piece and the U.S.' racial landscape when she suggests a comparison to Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*: "Smith's interest in performing the eloquent stutters and missteps that together create American character(s) offers one democratic alternative to the performance history of ethnographic display that [the Latinos'] piece so effectively theorizes and enacts" (161). People of color are still racialized as beasts and monsters necessarily caged into stereotypical categories for the safeguarding of the white audience members, but the cage simultaneously served as a safe-keeping of the natives from the acts of anger and fear by these same audiences felt threatened by them. Gómez-Peña has written about the skinheads who tried to get into their cage and attack the artists, and both he and Fusco remember the moment a spectator threw acid at his leg (Taylor 2003; Fusco 1995; Gómez-Peña 1996). In her final reflection on her experience being inside a cage, Fusco reveals a fear, a cruelty of her own:

"[There] are moments when I am glad that there are real bars. [There] are also times when, even though, I know I can get out of the cage, I can never quite escape" (Fusco 1995, 59). Her reflection is in direct response to her feeling threatened as a woman of color who is always metaphorically caged into the stereotype whites and non-natives may have of her as a hyper-sexual being. The fear of being faced with one's monstrous other is not one that belongs strictly to the white spectator who finds herself happy to see a body of color held captive so as to keep her safe; the fear of racial difference is also one that the person of color inside the golden cage may feel when she is the object of objectification. Objects may be easily destroyed, but as the artist tells us, human life too can be destroyed when life itself is displaced onto the art of cruelty. The artists' silence from the inside the cage partook in making her the monstrous other, so in a sense her silent speech created an act that spoke for her as the audiences projected a meaning onto her body. This racial speech act rooted in 1492/1992 makes racial ideologies in 1992 derivates of the same practice. And as their critics agree, the cultures of 1492 and 1992 are not so different.

What I see being excluded from the logic of these critics who see *Two Undiscovered Amerindians* as enacting a deliberate connection between the Indian of 1492 and the immigrant/racial minority in 1992 is an account of

the artists' own racial subjectivity: neither one of them is actually indigenous. Velasco, for example, argues that the

> performance piece also aims at escaping the binary structure provided by colonial discourse in recasting cultural and racial differences of *mestizo* people in terms of positionality. The redefinition allows the audience to dismantle the notion of the Other, to open a new space from which to claim the historicized experience of Latinas/os from a position of "border crossing," and to act accordingly (2002, 218-219).

Like Alicia Arrizón's (2006) calling for the theorizing of Latinidad with mestizaje at its center, Velasco also asks us to see mestizaje as the driving force behind the performers' political project. Arrizón sees mestizaje as irrevocably linked to a history of conquest, so any epistemic project around Latinidad and mestizaje must engage with this colonial inheritance in the Américas; doing otherwise would disregard the colonial haunting of mestizaje. Velasco, however, suggests that the racial identity of the Latino performers allows them to escape the colonial dichotomy because they are mestizos, a type of synthesis of both colonizer and colonized. One the one hand, his mestizaje is an ideal that sees a new semantics of racial relations and biological mixture as the key to colonial resistance –to transgress the projects that produce colonial relation–, but on the other, his ideology of Latinidad is also based on the exclusion of the very Other the performers wanted out of the cage: the indigenous person. If Velasco is right in arguing

that mestizaje and the mestizos are the intended subjects of address of Gómez-Peña's performance with Fusco, then what happens to the origins of mestizaje? The Indian, Spaniard, African and Asian of the "cosmic race" are reduced to the ashes and the remnants of a colonial nightmare, one that the mestizo Latino artists attempt to wake up from, unsuccessfully. The epistemology he attributes to Latinidad's mestizaje fails to create a space where the non-mestizo and the indigenous can enunciate their existence. In the end, the Indian is left still as the fallen subject created in 1492, and this tragic fall haunts the performance's racial performativity making a spectacle out of indigeneity.

Spectacles of a Conquest Past

The tragedy of conquest also frames Artaud's spectacles of indigeneity, which he first performed in *The Conquest of Mexico* and then rehearsed in his ethnographies of the Tarahumara in the Sierra Madre. His desire to find a cure for Europe's decadency led him to invent the Balinese performance as an alternative to modernity, but his writings on Mexico also reveal that he'd found a similar inspiration for this Theatre of Cruelty among the indigenous people there. After he wrote his play and the primary essays on cruelty, he delivered a series of lectures in Mexico City in the 1930s where

he spoke against the Surrealists' affiliation with Marxism. The remarks he makes against Marx's anti-metaphysical historical materialism recall his earlier ideas on the decline of European culture, since in both Paris and Mexico City he writes about the reasons why Europe and its modernity were dying. Likewise, even though his writings on Mexico make no mention of his encounter with the Balinese uncontaminated by modernity, his notes detailing how the Indians embody a new language of signification are all too reminiscent of his adoration for the mode of being that was performed in the Colonial Exposition. The lives of the contemporary Tarahumara, he believed, were made of the same essence as the Ancient Myths and existed in a time prior to Cortés' destruction of Tenochtitlan. He invented a temporal incongruence between colonialism and modernity by wishing to cross back in time and set aside the Conquest in the past, a time travel that would allow him to displace the impact of this historic tragedy on the lives of Indians in the present. In this temporal and ideological move, his gaze shifted from the East to the New World and positioned the Tarahumara outside of a modernity that did in fact go hand-in-hand with colonialism. Much like he did to the Balinese, his fetishization hailed the Tarahumara as un-modern and non-Western because he thought they lived in a world where colonialism simply did not exist. Artaud's art of cruelty, I argue, was a brand

of modern art that did not account for its own collusion with the invention of race in the terrain of conquest, inevitably reducing the Indian to a performative ontology that was not coeval with the artist's own.

Artaud first arrived in Mexico City in early 1936, when he gave his first lecture before the Mexican Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios at the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM).[9] The lecture, "Man Against Destiny," was a direct assault on Marxism as "a caricature of life [because] Marx wrestled with the image of fact, he tried to sense the meaning of history in its particular dynamism," and "out of this true fact there came, *also in history*, a false ideology" (Artaud 1976a, 357; 358, italics in the original). By the time he delivered his first speech, Artaud had already been kicked out of the Surrealists on the grounds that his revolutionary project was devoid of a political and social implication (Ahrends 1994). In the speech, he states that "for [him], the essence of Surrealism was an affirmation of life against all caricatures, and the revolution invented by Marx is a caricature of life" (Artaud 1976a, 357). Furthermore, he says, "historical and dialectical materialism is an invention of European consciousness. Between the true

[9] In a letter to Jean Paulhan, dated March 26, 1936, Artaud informs his friend that "by now [he] must have received the text of the three lectures [he] gave at the University of Mexico" (Artaud 1976, 365). According to Silviano Santiago (1999), Artaud gave his first speech at the Bolívar Amphitheater of the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, UNAM's oldest institution housing murals by Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco.

movement of history and Marxism there is a kind of human dialectic which does not accord with the facts. And we think that for the last four hundred years European consciousness has been living on an enormous error of fact." If the artist was intent on rewriting the world anew by leveling the metaphysical with the rational through his theatre of cruelty, Marx's ideology of the human dialectic was a false one because the philosopher was "too fixated on fact [and] he refused himself any sort of metaphysics" (358). His characterization suggests that any affiliation of Surrealist art forms with a Marxist ideology would produce an artifice devoid of life, not the living essence he wanted art to be. For Artaud, Marx's philosophy contributed to the demise of Western modernity by not producing a more viable human dialectic, and the artist's theatre sought to remedy this limited imagination of ontology. For the Surrealists who took back Artaud's membership card, theatre of cruelty was devoid of a political ideology as radical as the one they found in Marxism.

After spending much time expressing his disgust at Europe, Artaud concludes his first speech by calling on Surrealists to find a possible alternative to its dying culture in the country where his first spectacle of cruelty took place:

> Anyone who claims today that there several cultures in Mexico—the culture of the Mayas, that of the Toltecs, the

> Aztecs, the Chichimecs, the Zapotecs, the Totonacs, the Tarascans, the Otomis, etc.—does not know what culture is, he is confusing the multiplicity of forms with the synthesis of a single idea (Artaud 1976a, 364).

This proposal for the Surrealists to consciously remake European culture in the likes of non-Western people exiled him from their group because it ran counter to the synthesis proposed by Marx. The human dialectic that escapes Marx's ideology, he says, was a mode of life already practiced by Mexico's Indians: "[theirs was] the last to be based on blood and the magnificence of a land whose magic only certain fanatical imitators of Europe can still be aware of" (364). Indians held the answer to Europe's cultural wound because their life was framed around blood and magic, precisely that metaphysical world the Surrealists deemed an unviable revolution.

The Mexican Revolution takes precedence in his later lecture, titled "First Contact with the Mexican Revolution," where he states

> I realized that the revolution in Mexico has a soul, a living soul, an exacting soul, and not even the Mexicans themselves can say how far it can lead them. This is what is so moving about the revolutionary movement in Mexico (Artaud 1976a, 366).

His search for a new ontology took him to the New World to see if it really was true that in Mexico "people believe that the Mexican revolution is a revolution of the indigenous soul, a revolution to win back *the indigenous soul* as it was before Cortés" (372; 369, italics in the original). Ironically, assuming

that this form of indigeneity did in fact exist, Artaud had already completed his ontological search prior to his arrival: he went there to prove whether it was true that he could reach back in time to possess that purely Indian soul untouched by the conquistador. In essence, the ontology of cruelty he sought after was residing in a pre-colonial time where indigenous people lived "sacrificing to the sun on the steps of the pyramid of the Teotihuacán" with their beliefs in blood and magic (368). The Revolution's purpose was to provide him access to that indigenous soul, that "new concept of Man which [would] serve to nourish, to feed with its magical life [the] ultimate form of humanism" Europe had lost (368).

Before he delivered this lecture, however, he realized that President Lázaro Cárdenas was an inadequate nurturer for his new Man because his government was also overly preoccupied with ridding the indigenous of their metaphysical ideals. In a letter to his friend Jean Paulhan, he plans writes that he would

> speak against Marxism and in favor of the Indian Revolution, which everyone here forgets. This population of Whites (Creoles) and half-breeds would be very happy to hear no more about the Indians. Culturally speaking, they are behind America and Europe. It is heartbreaking to come all the way to Mexico only to find this (Artaud 1976, 365).

Instead of an indigenous pre-colonial utopia, what Artaud found on his arrival was a non-indigenous population, including mestizos, who wished to

rid the country of their indigenous elements. This anti-indigenous ideology was the exact opposite of the Mexico he thought he knew, so he warned his audiences against further dissociating themselves from the secret of the Indians:

> By imposing the forms of white civilization on the Indians, one would also run the risk of destroying everything they might have preserved of their former culture, for a culture and civilization are connected… I am very much afraid that there may be in Mexico an anti-Indian movement. To be concerned about the body and not about the mind is to risk losing the body too (369).

The true path towards a revolutionary understanding of humanity laid in the Indians who privileged mind and body in unison, not in opposition to each other. He concluded this speech by advising his Mexican audiences to stop "appropriating the forms of the mechanistic civilization of Europe and adopting them to [their] own spirit" (373), and to go back in time with him to find an eternal figure of the Indian.

Artaud's prescription for the Revolution's anti-Indian agenda addresses Cárdenas' indigenista politics, which espoused an ideology bent on treating Mexico's indigenous people as remnants rather than the living agents of the pre-colonial indigenous empires the artist believed them to be.[10] Feeling betrayed, he called the Revolution a form of retrograde white

[10] For an exhaustive discussion of indigenista ideology under Mexico's post-revolutionary state, see María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo (2001, 2003).

civilization because the Mexicans' emphasis on mestizaje rather than indigeneity rejected his plan to find a timeless Indian. The Mexican revolutionaries wanted to eradicate his ideal Indians of the past still living in the present, and to keep the indigenous soul that existed prior to the Conquest (still) dead and in the past. He also calls the Mexicans "that precipitate of innumerable races [that] appears as the diffuser of history," precisely because the indigenistas sought to subsume the particularity of indigenous groups under the nation's homogenous mestizo culture (Artaud 1976a, 371). What I see evidenced in the divergence between himself and indigenismo is a point of convergence rather than a site of betrayal: both cruelty and revolution turn on an axis of Indian antiquity. The Mexicans disillusioned Artaud when they focused on the dead Indian and erased the Indian in the present as an enunciation of that pre-Cortesian past. However, the indigenista agenda of the Mexican state is not entirely different from Artaud's own fetishization of indigenous people's pre-colonial imperial grandeur, since his dead imperial Indian is the same one the Mexican post-revolutionary state revered in its national imaginary. Artaud may think that the Indian body belongs to a natural order and signification, but it is a new ontology only insofar as it too is reminiscent of the ancient Indian whose empire was killed by the Conquest. His dead Indian of the past in the

present excludes the living of the present now, and this erasure of the living for the sake of art is no different than the ideological erasure of indigenous populations under Cárdenas' post-revolutionary state. Both reduce the Indian living in the present to a remnant of a glorious past, and collude in denying Mexican Indians access to a modern time equally framed by colonialism in the 1930s.

The artist leaves Mexico City soon after he arrived, claiming that Mexican artists, intellectuals and government officials had sent Cárdenas a petition to give him the funds necessary to "carry out a Mission in connection with the old races of Indians."[11] He goes to the Sierra Madre to find his missed connection to Mexico's rejected indigeneity:

> In northern Mexico, forty-eight hours from Mexico City, there is a race of pure red Indians called the Tarahumara. Forty thousand people are living there in a style that predates the Flood. They are a challenge to this world in which people talk so much about progress only because they despair of progressing (*PD* 3).

The Indians existed exactly forty-eight hours north of Artaud's location, but their style of living was further away from him since their culture was rooted

[11] Artaud, in a letter to Jean-Louis Barrault, dated July 10, 1936:

Since I last wrote you, the situation has changed. A petition signed by the most eminent intellectuals and artists of Mexico, and countersigned by several ministers and ministerial departments, has recently been sent to the President of the Republic, asking that I be given the means to carry out a Mission in connection with the old races of Indians (Artaud 1976, 374).

in a divinity before the Bible's God gave Noah's arc the gift of survival. The Tarahumara existed outside the temporal scale of the Bible story, so their very life posed a challenge to this world where development and progress are the order of the day. Their existence beyond the claims of the Mexican state distorted time as much as they threatened progress itself.

Artaud also finds the existence of a new language of embodiment in the time of the Great Ancient Myths:

> The Land of the Tarahumara is full of signs, forms, and natural effigies which in no way seem the result of chance—as if the gods themselves… had chosen to express their powers by means of these strange signatures … Of course, there are places on the earth where Nature, moved by a kind of intelligent whim, has sculptured human forms. But here the case is different, for it is over the whole geographic expanse of a race that Nature has chosen to speak (*PD* 12).

In comparison to the key he found in the Balinese's embodied essence, the Indians' contribution to Cruelty is found in their existential connection as indigenous to their particular geography: Nature and the gods chose to speak not through unmediated signs, but through indigenous bodies who fell from the sky onto unmarked natural space. Artaud the opportunity to observe their performances of the Peyote Dance during his visit to the Tarahumara, and he partook in a ceremony where the natives consume the peyote plant as part of their dances and prayers for health and prosperity. His observations of the ritual treat the religiosity as a site holding the second key to unlocking

his Theatre of Cruelty, because as with the Balinese essence performed in the Colonial Exposition, the divine essence that Tarahumara performed in front of him was derived from the original powers of life. Unlike the Balinese dancers, however, the Tarahumara dancers' divinity belonged to the natural geography of the natives' land, not the theatre stage.

According to Julie Stone Peters, the new aesthetic that Artaud created with Theater of Cruelty is what "also produced in him the *need* for the Mexican geography: the longing to identify a source and an objective cultural and spatial correlative—and a broader and more open landscape—for the metaphysics (manifest in primitive form and symbol) that the true theater was to reveal" (Stone Peters 2002, 230-231). Artaud's journey to Mexico was indeed driven by his desire to rediscover the sacredness of the peyote dance, but to understand his journey as one ending in natural space serves to disavow the Tarahumara of their own making of place. The landscape of the mountains is space in its most natural condition and without a particular meaning and symbolism attached to it, but the place of the Land of the Tarahumara and the Sierra Madre has meaning that the natives imbue with their everyday lives. This signification of the place of the Tarahumara is reduced to a source of inspiration for Artaud to pursue his journey, an objective space not filled with Artaudian signification because he has not yet

rediscovered it. To see the journey as one that is "longing to identify a source and objective cultural and spatial correlative" for this theater, as Stone Peters does, would participate or collude in his objectification of the place of the Tarahumara and deplete these people of their subjectivity lived out on the land. She also implies that Artaud's search for space was drawn to sacred indigenous practices that were only carried out in one particular space, but her emphasis on space rather than place reifies the Frenchman's exotic gaze that invented these native practitioners into mere objects rather than conscious subjects. Artaud's journey set these people as subjects unworthy of agentic signification because they exist in nature as part of natural space. The Indians remain as objects of study instead of partaking in the making of a place where they do worship and practice their beliefs. Unlike the Balinese dancers whose bodies he appreciated because they made meaning through movement, the agency he permits the Balinese he denies to the indigenous peoples. In Artaud, the Tarahumara are written on by the divine Nature of their Great Ancient Myth; they do not write themselves.

Stone Peters also argues that Artaud's task "was to help Mexico realize its unique civilization—to change the unconscious dreams of the primitive into reality" (Stone Peters 2002, 236). He went to the Sierra Madre in order to move the Tarahumara from their anachronistic condition back to

the mythical time before Cortés –the rightful time for their primitive dreams, as Stone Peters would put it. The journey to find a medicine for Europe became a project of self-invention when he made it his task to put the Tarahumara back in his reality of their un-modern primitivism, and not the place they occupied in the 1930s. Although the Tarahumara were very much alive and well in his current present where Artaud could encounter them, he observed the ritual and the ritual's practitioners of objects in a case study of a temporality untouched by the Conquest. Even in his anticolonial projects to protect them from both Europe and the Mexican government, with their perpetual attempts at denying the Tarahumara their cultivation of peyote and their religious practices, he failed to recognize how his anticolonialism was itself a derivative of conquest. The only mode in which the Tarahumara could exist in the world-making Theater of Cruelty was as the carriers of the supernatural that Artaud wanted them to have; it was his projection of what indigenous people were-and-did (being-doing) that made the Tarahumara's indigeneity a possibility. Much like the audiences of Fusco's and Gómez-Peña's performance who failed to feel the pain and suffering of the indigenous oppressed by centuries of colonialism, leaving the performers and the Indians they were playing at being perpetually colonized, Artaud failed to understand the Tarahumara as existing as indigenous people in their

present irrevocably marked by Conquest. For the Tarahumara living in the 1930s, that original indigeneity Artaud imagined for them was inaccessible without the ability move across time, and the artist's impossible indigeneity unmarked by colonialism existed only in the theatre.

The art of cruelty invented an ideology of indigeneity that exceeded Tarahumara lives. If terror in Artaudian cruelty is designed to imagine new modes of being, it is inherent that the European body's old being (i.e. rationally signified) be destroyed for the sake of the new cruel modality (i.e. emotion, metaphysics). Artaud called on Europeans to treat human life as an artifice, to actively create the everyday into an aesthetic form no different than the reality it mimics. The experiences of the Balinese and the Tarahumara on display, however, suggest that the artist did not actually understand that human life itself was put on the line when he crossed their bodies from the real to the artificial. His theater allows for a practice of everyday life that is different from the space surrounding us, but to see the human body as part of natural space destroys human subjectivity because he subsumes it under an ideology of race and performance that will not account for the non-Western worlds of the living. Hence, when Artaud projects his ideas of indigeneity and the symbolism of Mexican landscape onto the Tarahumara Indians, he makes them a part of nature and into objects no

different than rocks. His spectacular ideology of indigeneity ends their lives as subjects of history for the sake of art.

Spectacular Indians

Artaud's cruelty and the cruelty of Latino performance are both successes and failures. Artaud arguably succeeded in designing a radical political project to revamp European cultural practices through a new form of theatre that reimagined everyday life amidst a time of very real turmoil — the interwar period in Europe and the beginning of the fall of European empires (Jannarone 2009). His theater fails as an anticolonial tactic precisely because it was not entirely anticolonial: he made up an indigeneity and an Oriental for himself to project onto a people who could not otherwise exist as indigenous or Balinese in his temporal present, but in an impossible/inaccessible time before Cortés' arrival and Western modernity. While Artaud's impossible indigeneity is rooted in the defeat of the Aztec empire, for Fusco and Gómez-Peña racial difference and indigeneity were first invented at the moment when an Arawak eye met a European one. The indigeneity of their performance was anchored in that primal moment of colonial invention that escapes Artaud's imaginary. In a sense, the Latino performance was better able to historicize the making of indigenous people

as indigenous than Artaud was, because by placing 1492 at the heart of their critical performance, they attempted to dismantle the Conquest and the postcolonial trauma it produced right at the event of "discovery." When compared to *Two Undiscovered Amerindians*, Artaud's *The Conquest of Mexico* also fails as a viable critique of colonialism and the erasure of indigenous religious practices. His *Conquest* seeks to reproduce the Conquest of Mexico from the stage of affective cruelty rather than the theater previously used to stage it, but his theater does nothing more than reiterate and reconstruct these historical events intact: terror, genocide, colonialism and all remain in place. The radical potential of the Latino performance is precisely where Artaud's theater could not go: he could offer no potential for a critique of colonialism because his theater is entirely dependent on the existence of these events exactly as recorded and with the same outcome; had there been no Conquest, Artaud would have no original theater of cruelty to theorize about.[12]

The two performances do converge on a similar methodological form when all three artists insist that performance art must terrorize the

[12] Artaud was revising the essays included in *The Theater and Its Double* at the same time that he was putting together his essays on Mexico. Although the Balinese dancers were first to embody his theory, in his journey from Europe to Mexico his theater transferred from the Orient to the New World. Mexico and Bali shared the coin of exchange as Artaud moved from the West to the Orient, the Orient to the New World, and finally ended up secluded in a mental institution in France.

audience's emotions into feeling that reality can in fact be made anew. The "Second Manifesto for the Theater of Cruelty" begins by stating that Theatre of Cruelty is meant to create a spectacle of the events that will cause "the agitation and unrest characteristic of our epoch" in an effort to help "the public" reach that "poetic state [they are] seeking through love, crimes, drugs, war, or insurrection" (*TD* 122). These particular events must replicate the public's violent and negative emotions because it is only in "this sense of violent rigor" that we can understand the cruelty driving "a passionate and convulsive conception of life." In its first few sentences the Theater of Cruelty sets its goal to connect the audience's emotional and political goals and Artaud's theater can only exist if it is able to tap into the events that emotionally affect our time. Likewise, the Latino performers started out their traveling spectacle wanting to critique the racist ideologies behind contemporary multiculturalism by trapping themselves inside a cage in hopes of being set free. The indigeneity being projected from inside the cage was meant to naturally agitate the audiences' emotions, so they were not informed that the Indians inside were not actually natives. Even if their original motives were not to be an authentic indigeneity, their audiences saw an Other so real that it caused them to feel fear, anger, sadness, or sexual arousal, when confronted by real Indians, and they left them inside their cage

regardless of their emotional responses. The spectacle of *Two Undiscovered Amerindians* in its live action form tapped into their audiences' emotions very well by conjuring what they most feared or desired at that specific moment in time, and the artists were able to document their affective reaction from inside the cage.

The Latinos' artificial indigeneity was able to successfully affect the audience members and move them to feel a cruelty of their own. Artaud's *Conquest* had the same intent:

> and just as there will no unoccupied point in space, there will be neither respite nor vacancy in the spectator's mind or sensibility. That is, between life and the theater there will be no distinct division, but instead a continuity (*TD* 126).

The indigeneity performed by the cage and created "in the spectator's mind [and] sensibility" could arguably be seen as an example of what Artaud wanted to create. Montezuma, the central indigenous figure in his *Conquest*, is described as

> split in two, divided; with some parts of himself in half-light, others dazzling; with many hands coming out of his dress, with expressions painted on his body like a multiple portrait of consciousness, but from the consciousness of Montezuma all the questions pass forth into the crowd (130).

The Indian's internal struggles are to be projected onto the crowd witnessing the spectacle of his trauma. He seems almost unreal, but the very performance of this artifice on the actor's body makes it very real indeed. If

the actor's body does as Artaud instructs, then his body becomes what it is that it performs, and his performance of Montezuma's internal drama transfers these emotions onto the crowd. The performance of Indian feelings makes them real and able to move the audience into an affective reaction to the brown emotions. In the Latinos' performance the cage was center stage, but its place of exhibition in its entirety became part of the performance as audience members came to observe them. As the majority of the audiences believed their bodies' performance of indigenous authenticity, they believed they really were Indians: "between life and the theater there [was] a continuity" in their "mind or sensibility," and their spectacular Indian was the real thing.

The cruelty the Latino performance also fails, even as it succeeds in using theater for the sake of radical social change —it was at least successful as Artaud would want it. Fusco and Gómez-Peña designed their performance art to denounce the prolonged consequences of 1492 that have proved beyond terrorizing and destructive for indigenous people, but the Indians were once again left to suffer the effects of colonialism when their audiences felt the need to keep them inside. The performance, in its critique of Conquest and its Quincentenary spectacles, could not escape acting out the scenarios of discovery that rotate on an axis of an indigeneity always-

already framed by Conquest. Velasco (2002) states that the film documenting the performance, *The Couple in the Cage*, [13] "is a metaphor to describe the Europeans' and Americans' inability to deal with the Indians' difference. To the audience of the performance the Indians in the cage resemble the puzzling encounter with the Other because they do not know they are the audience, and they are unaware it is a performance" (211). There are two types of audiences: those watching the live performance, and those watching the audience in the film watching the live performance. Those of us watching the documentary are hence twice removed from experiencing the live event, and we can see the audience in the film not introject the performance's intent when we watch the video. Still, I am not convinced this audience did not get that it was a performance, a show on display. Even if they did not feel it in themselves to let the performers out of the cage, the reality was that they were confronted with the cage being exhibited for them to see. The exhibition, in all of its golden absurdity, was to be consumed by them whether they knew it was an unreal show or not.

It could be argued that the audience members who didn't let them out of the cage did not do so because the performers were either simply putting

[13] *The Couple in a Cage: A Guatianaui Odyssey* (1993) is the film-documentary co-directed by Coco Fusco and Paula Heredia comparing footage from the performance with footage from 19th-Century exhibitions of non-Western peoples.

on a show—they did not need to be let out if they were there willingly behind bars—, or because they deserved to be imprisoned and kept at a distance. In either case, the result was the same: the Indians had to stay in their cage. For those who did know it was a show, and understood its particular political critique, but decided to not let them out, the result was identical to the former scenario: the caged remained locked. Also, to my knowledge, neither artist has written anywhere that non-white audiences who got their anticolonial message attempted to let them out either, and the white non-natives who did try to get them out wanted to hurt them. In this last scenario, the cage saved the performers' lives, as Fusco's earlier words demonstrate. No matter the audience, the scenario of discovery remained as it was scripted without change.

The question then arises regarding this repetition: Did the Latino performers make up an indigeneity or did they unconsciously partake in the scenarios of discovery? They played at being Indian, an absurdly spectacular Indian, but Indian nonetheless, and in doing so they became indigenous through their performance. Their performance of indigeneity was an ideology with a very particular critique of the Quincentenary, and in making their denunciation they acted out the indigenous ethos they felt they needed for their critique to be successful. The spectacularity of their indigeneity,

with its use of computers, voodoo-doll-making, banana-feeding the female for $10, dances to rap-music, showing the male's genitals for $5, sunglasses, etc., may have been designed to be as absurd and entertaining as any other Quincentenary spectacle, but their cruelty was asking their spectators to feel and to understand that genocide and colonialism should not be celebrated. Through their indigeneity they entered a framework where "we've seen it all before": "the discoverer, conqueror, 'savage,' and native princess" who play a part in almost every script of colonialism (Taylor 2003, 28). As Diana Taylor has argued in her exhaustive study on theater and performance, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003), the scenario of discovery itself, like "all scenarios[,] ha[s] localized meaning" and "allows for many possible 'endings'" (28). The end results of Theater of Cruelty and Latino performance provided the same outcome, and they (un)consciously "promote[d] certain views while helping to disappear others" where the Conquest may not be forced to repeat itself. Artaud, Fusco, and Gómez-Peña may not have been able to stage a different conclusion to the scenarios of discovery, but perhaps the answer lies not in the performances and theories of non-natives playing at being anticolonial. If the Frenchman's playing at being Indian and the Latino's brownface performance were cruel ideologies of indigeneity, then a different type of

performance is necessary for indigenous people to no longer be relegated to the stuff of spectacularity. What art of cruelty needs to surpass the tragedy of coloniality/modernity is a decolonial form of performance art, one created by (an)other Indian whose racial performativity is not a relational mode rehearsing the time of damnation.

CHAPTER 4

REHEARSALS OF THE DAMNED:
DAMNATION, FREEDOM, SALVATION

I'd like to think of my performance not as audience participation so much as audience salvation. I like anyone here who spittles the guilt of the last 500years to please report to the stage now. I'd like to ask any white men who would like to take the burden of the last 500yrs of guilt to report to the stage now. I'd like to offer you a bite of my burrito to absolve you of the sins of the last 500s years of repression of guilt. I'd like to ask now for any white men who'd like to participate in the ritual of purification to come up to the stage now.
— Nao Bustamante, *Indig/urrito*

MICHAEL: For a moment, I felt her hand in mine and when I touched her I felt happy… I mean, I imagined I touched her. Other people laughed – looked at her and laughed. Her mother laughed the loudest. That's when I knew… I had to save her.
— Migdalia Cruz, *Fur*

How will we choose to describe our past, now, at this moment, as an enunciation in the present? If "history shows that everything that has been thought will be thought again by a thought that does not yet exist," then what will we choose to think again as our history, the history that we want to survive as we decolonize a historical imaginary that veils our thoughts, our words, our languages?
— Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*

Nao Bustamante's *Indig/urrito* and Migdalia Cruz's *Fur* are Latina theatres of terror staging the present within a tragic continuity of Conquest. Their stage, however, is not interested in uncritically rehearsing the mode of tragedy that haunts the earlier chapters of my *Impossible Indians*. The visions of tragedy espoused by Usigli, Moraga, Magaña, Fusco, and Gómez-Peña do not upstage the Indians of the Latina stage because these find an alternative to colonial modernity that theirs did not. Bustamante's racist performance and Cruz's absurd play, I argue, desire to perform a freedom and salvation from the tragic temporality that has plagued the damnation of racial subjects in the Americas since 1492.

In *Fur*, the Nuyorican playwright creates a world of sideshow freaks with three characters at its center: Citrona, a young hirsute Latina; Nena, a hairless white Latina; and Michael, a white man. As the plot develops from the initial freak show scene, Michael buys Citrona and imprisons her in a cage because he desires her bestiality.[1] Nena, hired by Michael to hunt for and feed the beast, falls in love with the white man and plays at seducing Citrona in hopes of being loved by her master. Citrona feels the pain of rejection when Nena refuses to love her back, and she rejects Michael's love

[1] The epigraph by Migdalia Cruz is from "Fur: A Play in Nineteen Scenes." *Out of the Fringe: Contemporary Latina/Latino Theatre and Performance*, Ed. Caridad Svich and María Teresa Marrero. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2000. Quote on page 83. Further citations from Cruz' play included in this chapter will be cited as "*F*."

in return. The beast devours them both in the end, committing cannibalism when Michael sets her free from the cage.

The racial order of Cruz's play all too easily recalls Shakespeare's 17th-century play *The Tempest* and the anticolonial imaginary of Aimé Césaire's rewrite, *A Tempest*.[2] *Fur*'s protagonist, Citrona, is enslaved by her white master as the object of racialized desire made of purely sensory material without rationality. What sets *Fur* within this tragic tradition of dramatic creation is Cruz's response to the primal scene of colonial terror and the invention of Caliban and "Caliban's Woman" as the (im)possible native subjects of Shakespeare's and Césaire's stage. For the playwright of the Renaissance and the playwright of Anticolonialism, the white men's immediate response to the discovery of Caliban is to capture and take him to Europe where he can be displayed for monarchs; this is a rehearsal both of Columbus and his Arawak man and the spectacular displays of non-white peoples thereafter. Césaire surpasses Shakespeare's play by staging a Caliban that expresses a desire to reach racial freedom, but the curtain drops in *A*

[2] I recognize that there exist rich traditions of theoretical, cultural, political and historical engagements with Césaire's and Shakespeare's "Caliban" and their importance for the modern/colonial world. My chapter covers a vast geographic, idelogical and historical ground, but adequately engaging the traditions stemming from these two playwrights' oeuvres is beyond the scope of my dissertation project and this chapter in particular. While I fully recognize that my lack of engagement with these traditions may limit my chapter's ideological potential, I hope that my analysis of the plays in light of the ideas expressed throughout my dissertation may also generate a productive engagement with Caliban.

Tempest with Caliban and Prospero left to battle for each other's existence forever. Césaire's is indeed a tragic imaginary where the past enunciates itself in the present repeatedly without the end of time in sight. Neither the original *Tempest* nor its Caribbean rehearsal, in other words, allows for the possibility of Caliban's freedom from slavery or his salvation from the tragic temporality that binds him to the Conquest.

Caliban's first entrance into coloniality/modernity is off stage. Prospero first refers to him in *The Tempest* as "the son that [Sycorax] did litter [on the island], a freckled whelp, hag-born not honored with a human shape… It was a torment to lay upon the damned, which Sycorax could not again undo."[3] The slave's plot to regain his humanity then takes a step back as the play gives center stage to Prospero's reconciliation with his Italian monarchical family; *The Tempest* closes with a silent Caliban led off the stage in chains. In his second entrance, Caliban's silence is completely shattered when Césaire writes him as "a black slave" that chooses "death [rather] than humiliation and injustice" under Prospero's reign; *A Tempest* closes with him forever awaiting war and revolution.[4] Neither entrance into modernity offers

[3] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Ed. Peter Hulme and William Sherman. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004. Quote on pages 16-17. Further citations from *The Tempest* included in this chapter will be cited as "TT."

[4] Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, Trans. Richard Miller. New York: TCG Translation, 2002. Quote on page 28. Further citations from *A Tempest* included in this chapter will be cited as "AT."

the slave his freedom: the former cannot imagine it, and the latter imagines but cannot perform it. Sylvia Wynter (1990) has argued that Caribbean women writers respond to this limited dramatic imagination of the colonial difference by giving credence to the possibility of a "Caliban's Woman" that can in fact exist, act and be beyond the limits of Postcolonialism and Eurocentrism. It is here where I argue that the ordering of *Fur*'s world poses a challenge to Caliban's tragedy and surpasses the theatre that created him. Citrona is the female equal to Caliban's monstrosity and racial subjection, but she transcends his fate in order to love, desire and create her own freedom from racial bondage through cannibalism. The world of Cruz's play becomes the darker side of both Shakespeare and Césaire when Citrona acts out in response to her subordination by a white man: she is that silent beast kept safely at arm's length, but she lashes out in a savage vengeance against her master when she is set free. The cruel irony at the end of *Fur* is that although she is now free from racial bondage, Citrona is left as a cannibal living in a deep and silent blackness without access to salvation. Citrona is still Fanon's *damné*.

In contrast to this savage theatre, I suggest that Bustamante's strap-on burrito gives us a more productive answer to the question of freedom and racial salvation. Bustamante's *Indig/urrito* turns away from Caliban's plan of

destruction and Citrona's cannibalism in order to bring us a way out of tragedy that does not leave violence and complete darkness as the only viable solutions. When artists of color were told they had to create work commemorating the year 1492 in order to receive funding, Bustamante performed *Indig/urrito* to remind her audiences that this celebratory call for artistic creation was uncritical of its collusion with indigenous genocide begun that same year. Stepping practically nude on stage, she strapped on a burrito to her crotch and asked her audiences to "think about it as the representation of the modern indigenous peoples."[5] She then called on white men to come onstage, drop to their knees before her, open their mouths, and take a bite out of her burrito to rid themselves of five hundred years of colonial guilt. The performance was a "ritual of purification" carried out by a brown priestess who came to free lives from inheriting the first conqueror's legacy of violence.

I argue that as an act of freedom from colonial violence, the Chicana performance rehearses a pivotal scene of 16th-century colonial terror: the Requerimiento, the original speech act constituting the racial subjection of native peoples carried out under the name of salvation by the Spanish. When read properly, the *Requerimiento* authorized the speaking conquistador with

[5] Nao Bustamante, *Indig/urrito*. Performance video, 1992.

the right to wage war against the native inhabitants he discovered during his invasion of the Americas, and to enslave them should they not accept the terms of their submission. As part of the legalization of a systemic destruction of indigenous lives, the Requerimiento's written document and performed speech created the grounds by which the inhabitants of the Americas became "natives": without Christian reason, they were reduced to the same purely sensory materiality as Caliban. Savagery, cannibalism, barbarity and irrationality were all joined in the Requerimiento to reduce native subjects to the embodiment of everything that Europe claimed it was not, even as it cleared the way for the destruction of everyday life in the New World.

Bustamante turns the native's embodiment of damnation into a performance that undoes the effects of conquest by treating bodies of color as the site of enunciation rather than the citation of the tragic subject of coloniality. Her queer erotics exceed the limits of the archive when she rehearses an-other form of racial salvation to bring about a different future for racialized subjects. She stepped onto the stage of Theatre Artaud in 1992 to perform a ritual of audience salvation and rid us of those ugly feelings reaching back five centuries. This is a performance of decoloniality because it wishes to produce a future not entrenched in damnation, a future that

Bustamante creates from within the coloniality of desire to save both colonizer and colonized. *Indig/urrito* gives us a way out of colonial terror where the future of race is not the darker side of the Americas.

My earlier chapters outline the ways in which theatre and performance artists have framed their experiences of coloniality within a cyclical time that either constricts or leaves no space for native subjects to end their subjectification under colonial projects in the present. In response to their tragic ideology of indigeneity, this chapter argues that Cruz's and Bustamante's Latina rehearsals of damnation push us towards salvation from the tragedies haunting the temporal incongruence of race. Rather than rehearsing or re-inscribing the acts of colonial terror contained in the archive –racial exhibition, mass murder, slavery–, *Fur* and *Indig/urrito* turn to the brown body conditioned by these acts of cruelty to make possible a future of race not entrenched in tragedy. Their imagination of a new temporality of race is the decolonial imaginary that Emma Pérez calls for when she asks us to "decolonize a historical imaginary that veils our thoughts, our words, our languages" so that a new future of freedom and salvation can be created (Pérez 27). The tragic mode of Latina theatres of terror continuously enunciates the past in the present, but their present seeks to enunciate itself differently now and into the future. Their imaginary of a time when race is

done differently, so we can finally move on, is decolonial performance at its best.

1st Rehearsal: Damnation

The debate among decolonial theorists over the past two decades surrounding the invention of race in the Americas places it in the Valladolid trial between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda over the humanity of indigenous people.[6] Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007) argues that the 16th-century trial over the Spanish legal right to war on the natives was a mode of behavior that was anti-relational. The Spaniards treated the natives as barbarians and prisoners of war well before their humanity was debated in court. As a result of their mistreatment of Indians as less than people, these were effectively denied a say in whether they wanted to have Christian souls or not. The decolonial philosopher bases his arguments on the question of ontology to claim, following Anibal Quijano, that this was a foundational moment in the history of race. In questioning their humanity, the anti-relational field of the trial also denied the natives access to reason, making them them eligible for slavery and a life in damnation. That was the

[6] I discuss the 16th-century debate and its implications for 20th-century theater in chapter one, "Tragically Mexican: Rodolfo Usigli's Racial Performativity." I discuss of the invention of race in the modern/colonial world more at length in my introductory chapter, "Introducing the Impossible Indians: Race, Time, and Performance, Otherwise." See Mignolo (2000), Maldonado-Torres (20007), Quijano (2000), and Wynter (1990, 2003).

birth of race: condemning natives to a notion of being that was inferior to (European) human life forms.

I would push the decolonial frame in two different directions. First, I would like to think of the trial's significance as indeed establishing a critical moment in the history of race, but also as one particular scene of subjection that was part of a larger set of scenarios of conquest that invented América. Before Las Casas and Sepúlveda, Christopher Columbus trapped, kidnapped and exhibited an Arawak man so European audiences could see physical evidence that in "India" he had found creatures different than human beings. Columbus' anti-relationality established a hierarchy of being that made the Indian a thing that could be used as inhumanly as possible; the trial rehearsed this dehumanization by further questioning the Indians' humanity. In between Columbus and the trial, I argue that the Requerimiento develops from Columbus' treatment of the indigenous as inhuman bodies and predates the trial's dismissal of native embodiment. The Spanish ritual and its conditioning of the native body for extermination animated the trial through its imagination of indigeneity and its materiality/irrationality; this groundwork has not been considered by the decolonialists to date. Secondly, I trace the rehearsal of these processes of damnation in two plays inspired by the Conquest and its invention of race. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and

Césaire's *A Tempest*, I argue, are iterations of what the trial, Columbus' exhibition, and the Spanish regime of law set out to do. The plays rehearse the making of race through praxis, quite literally by rehearsing the scenes of subjection theorized by the decolonialists.[7] The relationality of Caliban's epistemic and physical subordination interpellates the body of the damned as the site of slavery, but the play also hails Caliban's body as the citation of a decolonial imaginary where freedom may be possible.

Decolonial theorists have thought through the scene with Las Casas and Sepúlveda by way of epistemology –did the Indians have souls and were they rational?–, and they have largely ignored the performative qualities exercised when Casas faced off with Sepúlveda on the stage of the Spanish court in Valladolid. Their focus on the epistemic, as I analyze in my introductory chapter, ignores the bodies of those people deemed inferior to the Spanish because they were made of a materiality and essence so different from the Europeans who came to destroy them. While the very utterance of

[7] Usigli also performs a triple rehearsal of the *damné*: his essay on tragedy follows in detail Fray Juan de Zumárraga's 16th-century citation of the Aztecs' performativity; he gives Zumárraga center stage in his play *Corona de luz* (1963), where the friar's notes are spoken verbatim by a different character; and this last installment of the *Coronas Trilogy* stages a trial in the metropolis between a Spanish friar, a soldier and a king fighting over the human nature of the Indians. In a sense, his rehearsals of the scenarios of conquest are evidence that the tragic Mexican plays very well alongside Shakespeare, whom he compliments for his limited attempt at being a true tragedian, and Césaire, whose anticolonial stage is situated at the limits of the Renaissance. The playwrights' rehearsals compliment each other's cultural politics of conquest.

the question was predicated on the assumption that it was possible the Indians may not posses human bodies with souls, the decolonialists focus on the nature of the question as a denial of cognitive potential. Walter Mignolo, for example, states that "languages are not something human beings have but rather something of what human beings are, coloniality of power and of knowledge engendered the coloniality of being (*colonialidad del ser*)."[8] Both power and knowledge are joined to constitute the human being through language, establishing that ontological privilege can only be accessed through essence Ontology is made of language, not a material being capable of acting or being acted upon. The redemption of the Indians' cognitive abilities takes precedence over the natives' embodied knowledge, which was also denied to them when their humanity and rational abilities were put in question in 1550. Evidently, the native body disappears from our field of vision if we take Las Casas and Sepúlveda as the *modus operandi* for thinking about race and the coloniality of power, knowledge and being.

Sylvia Wynter's early essay, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman'" (1990), offers us a place where the coloniality of native ontology can be theorized differently. Predating the arguments most recently made by Mignolo,

[8] Mignolo quoted in Maldonado-Torres (2007, 242).

Quijano and Maldonado-Torres, Wynter stems from the experience of Caribbean women writers to argue that "the variable of *race/racial* difference [became] since the sixteenth-century even more primarily [the New World order of] destiny" (357). The coding of difference, she says, was a result of

> Western Europe's post-medieval expansion into the New World (and earlier into Africa) and with its epochal shift out of primarily *religious* systems of legitimation and behavior [that allowed for] her peoples' expropriation of the land/living space of the New World peoples … based on the secular concept of the "non-rational" inferior, "*nature*" of the peoples to be expropriated and governed; that is, of an ostensible difference in "natural" substance which, for the first time in history was no longer *primarily* encoded in the male/female gender division as it had been hitherto in the symbolic template of all traditional and religiously based human order, but now in the cultural-physiognomic variations between the dominant expanding European civilization and the non-Western peoples that, encountering, it would now stigmatize as "natives" (357-358, emphasis in the original).

For Wynter, it was in the shift from male/female to Western peoples/natives, from sexual difference to material/natural substance, that race came to determine a new order for the world. The European right to conquer the New World shifted the ordering of human life from a male/female division to a new order established by the "difference in 'natural' substance" between Europe and its Others. New World peoples were made of a materiality so ostensibly different from the other peoples that they were treated as irrational and made of an inferior nature by those

who came to conquer them. Race and racial difference, in other words, were created when the natives' difference in "cultural-physiognomy" placed them closer to the bottom of the scale of human reason and below that of their Old World counterparts. That Wynter situates the invention of race specifically with the invention of natives as bodies without reason cannot be overlooked here. This is the first moment in decolonial theory where it becomes evident that race, since its inception, has been a question of embodiment as well as epistemology and phenomenology.[9]

Another scene of subjection took place in the terrain of colonialism well before the Valladolid trial and the epistemic turn in decoloniality, and it marks the space and time where race can be theorized alongside embodiment. Historian Patricia Seed, who studies the Requerimiento as ritual of conquest in her book, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (1995), cites this version of the political protocol legalizing the Spaniards' rule over indigenous people:

> Oh behalf of His Majesty,… I … his servant, messenger… notify and make known as best I can that God our Lord one and eternal created heaven and earth… God our Lord gave charge [of all peoples] to one man named Saint Peter, so that he was lord and superior of all the men of the world … and

[9] Wynter's most recent essay, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument" (2003), shifts ideological gears to answer the question of ontology by turning to epistemology and the Valladolid trial.

> gave him all the world for his lordship and jurisdiction (*señorio y jurisdicción*)… Of these Pontiffs… made a donation of these islands and mainland of the Ocean Sea to the Catholic kings of Spain … Almost all who have been notified [of this] have received His Majesty and obeyed and served him, and serve his as subjects … and turned Christian without reward or stipulation … and His Majesty received them … as … subjects and vassals … Therefore I and require you as best I can … [that] you recognize the church as lord and superior of the universal world, and the most elevated Pope… in its name, and His Majesty and I in his name will receive you … and will leave your women and children free, without servitude so that with them and with yourselves you can freely do what you wish … and we will not compel you to turn Christians. But if you do not do it … with the help of God, I will enter forcefully against you, and I will make war everywhere and however I can, and I will subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and His Majesty, and I will take your wives and children, and I will make them slaves… and I will take your goods, and I will do to you all the evil damages that a lord may do to vassals who do not obey or receive him. And I solemnly declare that the deaths and damages received from such will be your fault and not that of His Majesty, nor mine, nor of the gentlemen who came with me.[10]

In 1550, the Valladolid trial established that Western notions of the human condition discarded the natives of their humanity and treated them as barbarians without the possibility of knowledge production. The correlation between epistemic and ontological terror in the colony, however, was carried out decades before the trial when each conquistador performed the ritual of

[10] Lewis Hanke's translation of the *Requerimiento*, cited in Seed (1995, page 69). A Spanish version of the text from 1513 can be found here: <http://www.gabrielbernat.es/espana/leyes/requerimiento/r1513/r1513.html> Accessed on 1/17/2012.

Spanish law. As each conqueror first stepped onto the terrain of New World, he was legally bound to read aloud to the natives that infamous legal document created in 1511. The conqueror presented the natives with the rites by which they would be made to subordinate themselves to the law of the Spanish crown. The logic of the document was that if they did not agree with this required, they would legally face war, slavery and death. The power of the Requerimiento was derived in its written and illocutionary forms that could legally constraint race and freedom, both in the writing of the letter of violence and the conquerors' performance of their human superiority derived from divine sources. First, the creation of the written document itself presumed the possibility of enslaving those new peoples that the Christian conquistadors would encounter in their invasion of América. If the Indians were to be treated as equal to the European men from the moment they saw each other, would there have been a need to write laws dictating the military right to conquer them? For Wynter and Maldonado-Torres, the Indians were legally treated as the defeated of war well before the white men set foot on native soil (Wynter 1990, 2003; Maldonado-Torres 2007). Secondly, the public readings of the document then created the scenarios where the Spaniards were legally endowed with the power to kill and enslave. The scenes were exemplary of colonial relations: the conqueror would create

an audience for his performance of superiority, and his audiences of native peoples would be unwilling participants in the play he set up for them to be his death-ready subordinates. The arrival of other conquistadors and their repetitions of the Requerimiento were thereafter predicated on this negation of human life. Hence, these speeches rehearsed the rhetoric of war and brought the natives in the colony the gift of terror disguised as spiritual salvation, prior to the 1537 Papal decree declaring that the Indians were human and the 1550 trial establishing that they had souls. The trial dehumanized the Indians with the very utterance of the question. The speech act called them into being through an act of war.

According to José Rabasa, "colonialism, at least in the version practiced by Spaniards in the Americas, was not just about dominating people by the force of arms but about transforming Indians into able bodies and obedient subjects" (Rabasa 2000, 20). He points to two moments where Bartolomé de las Casas questioned the "validity of summoning Indians to surrender their political sovereignty and recognize a new regime of law" (6): the first was the publication of his *Brevissima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, and second was his legal debate with Sepúlveda. This "new regime of law" refers to the legislation establishing the proper way of evangelizing the Indians in the newly conquered territories, the so-called "peaceful

conquests" whereby the indigenous were called forth to accept the love of God through the blood of Christ, or reject it and be enslaved. As Rabasa argues, the offering of Christ bound by the implicit obligation of accepting the Christian gift of salvation was a speech act

> constitut[ing] a form of love speech in which threat on the Indians' life and freedom (even when not explicit) always remains a possibility within the historical horizon if the summoning is not heeded… The interpellated subjects have no option but to [publicly] accept the terms of their subordination, the categories that define them as inferior, and institutions that reorganize their life (6).

With the Indians' lives and freedom under the threat of annihilation should Christ be rejected, the document's love speech was equally an act of hate speech.

In the Requerimiento we find the clearest example where love speech constitutes hate speech, and a set of performances of colonialism where we can begin to think of the process by which Indians were made into subjects through lawful warfare. The argument between the Las Casas and Sepúlveda that established the Crown's peaceful conquests through a just and holy war is not new one, but the scenes of subjection where Rabasa theorizes the conjunction between writing and violence provide an entry point for thinking about the indigenous body as a primary site of colonial interpellation. To reiterate Rabasa: whereas the Althusserian classic scenario

of interpellation implies subordination by recognizing the policeman's shout –"Hey, you there"–, the hailing of the native in the terrain of colonialism is a much different utterance: "Hey, you there, subordinate yourself to the Crown or I'll kill you" (Rabasa 2000, 5). Althusser framed the calling of man into being through recognition and not through a deadly exercise of military power; he said "Hey, you there," not "Hey, you there, stop or I will kill you." Interpellation is indeed an exercise of a dominant ideology, but the terms under which Western man is hailed as a subject do not overtly make him the target of annihilation. In the New World, interpellation made the Indians ontologically inferior and hence eligible for death should they not heed the call to subordinate.

Rabasa's ideas propel scholars of the colonial period to think about the relationship between the ideological and physical interpellation of natives bodies by Spanish law. He is cautious to avoid using the term "race" when he discusses the relationship between writing and violence, but I suggest that his argument is pushing us to think of racialization in terms of embodiment more succinctly.[11] Colonialism, he says, was as much as about "*transforming* Indians into able bodies" as much as it was about military domination

[11] Rabasa places the invention of "race" in the 18th-century Enlightenment, when the categories of Europe and its Others were put into place in the ordering of the world. This claim is part of his argument calling on scholars of the postcolonial period to avoid reproducing the Enlightenment's creation of otherness, and to trace the production of otherness to an earlier time and space where difference was coded otherwise.

(Rabasa 2000, 20; emphasis mine). Colonial subjectivity was about reducing the Indians' lives to bodies that could be made and manipulated as the conquerors saw fit. The colonizer's interpellation implied not the birth of consciousness through man's subordination to a dominant ideology. Rather, it was dependent on a pre-conceived notion of corporeality that partnered a lack of rationality with a particular body that could be killed. While interpellation proper also assumes there is a body involved in the process of recognition, as man must physically recognize the law calling him down – turning around, looking at the officer, etc.–, the centerpiece of Althusser's ideas is the creation of a conscious subject, not a physical one. For indigenous people being forced to accept conquest peacefully or be killed, and being so-called-irrational and barbaric as they were, the creation of subjectivity came after they were discarded of consciousness, when they were treated as bodies eligible for physical death or enslavement. On the one hand, this process of subjectification, having already denied indigenous people human rationality and consciousness, in fact reduced them to the colonizers' personal property. On the other hand, the Requerimiento and the laws dictating the Christian way of conversion hailed the natives as subjects of salvation: "we bring you the gift of Christ's blood," accept and be saved. Salvation also had a much a darker underside: negate the gift and your life

and freedom are no more. Other scenarios of conquest can be thought about as historical moments inventing the irrationality and inferiority of the Indians, but the scenes of the Requerimiento already presumed they were irrational and then made them inferior precisely because they were alive. What was primarily under threat was the physical life of the Indian when the native body became the target for murder in the name of Christ. At the very moments when the invading Christians spoke to the natives on native land to give them the option of salvation or heathen destruction, their hate speech act masquerading as love speech made indigenous people the embodiment of Fanonian damnation.

The pairing of irrationality with corporeality exemplifies Wynter's arguments regarding the shift in the ordering of the world after Europe's expansion into América. If "the primacy of the *anatomical* model of sexual difference as the referential mode of *mimetic* ordering" shifted towards "that of the *physiognomic* model of racial/*cultural* difference," then it becomes evident that after 1492 the racialized body became the centerpiece around which the world turns (Wynter 1990, 358; emphasis in the original). The shift in the body's meaning from male/female to European/native, she says, is dramatized most clearly in a figure staged by Shakespeare's play.

Theorizing the creation of Caliban as a native subject of the Americas, however, requires engaging with two mammoth-sized dramatic traditions that are intimately inclusive of each other: modernity and coloniality. In the tradition of modernity, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* stages the discovery of a new world by Prospero and his dominion over the island's native inhabitants –human, divine and magical alike. Prospero's very own version of the Conquest of the New World ends on a good note: he forgives his monarchical family for turning him over to the Inquisition and robbing him of his royal titles, blesses his daughter's marriage to his nephew, and continues to rule over Caliban and the island as his personal property. Forgiveness and a blessed marriage foreground the play's last scene, where Prospero still owns Caliban as his slave. Rodolfo Usigli (1950) has already reminded us that Shakespeare was not set up to challenge Europe's possession and enslavement of the New World, nor to offer critical insight into the very real catastrophes that propelled 17th-century Europe to reach political and cultural prominence. In the tradition of coloniality, Aimé Césaire rewrites Caliban for the 20th-century stage in *A Tempest*, where the darker side of the Renaissance play takes precedence. The stage is set for a Black theatre of anticolonialism: Caliban is now a black slave who curses Prospero in his native language, denies his attempted rape of Miranda, and

re-negotiates his subjection to white men in exchange for Prospero's death. Most importantly, Césaire's Caliban is willing to sacrifice his own life if that is the price he must pay to be free from bondage. That is the key difference between the two plays: Shakespeare's could not fathom the day where the slave would possess enough cognitive skills to think freely; Césaire's takes the experience of slavery as the epistemic grounds where Caliban can push towards a humanity acting out a full-fledged freedom.

Neither Shakespeare's colonialism nor Césaire's colonial difference, however, gives Caliban his freedom when both plays leave him to slavery. I see Caliban positioned at an impossible crux in these scenes staging the slave first as an irrational native under colonial rule and then as a rational agent of anticolonial freedom. If Shakespeare could not imagine a possible world without bondage, then this tragic flaw is reproduced when Césaire rehearses that same tragedy in an attempt to make Caliban fully human but is not able to actively create said freedom. The anticolonial impulse to revisit the archive and bring Caliban back to human life, I argue, is constricted by the very archive and theatrical tradition Césaire's play wished to radicalize. Shakespeare and Césaire perform on the same stage of coloniality/modernity, a complicity that works to the detriment of the native left to live in damnation and forever desiring to be free.

The plays' collusion in producing this ideology of native subjectivity is best understood by tracing the primal scenes of colonial invention that both Shakespeare and Césaire rehearse. In the first scene, Caliban becomes a slave with the help of the devil. He is, according to Prospero, "[a] poisonous slave, got by the devil himself" (TT 18). He is "not honored with a human shape" (16) because his mother's involvement with the devil made him of a materiality far different from those beings who did have a human shape. Since his mother was a witch and his father the devil, his body cannot possibly be human. He is first condemned to slavery after he tried "to violate the honor of [Prospero's] child" and "[people] this isle with Calibans" (19); his first threat laid in the biology of his human physique. Caliban's body posed a threat in that he could procreate with the white man's daughter and populate the island with creatures closer in material essence to him –and the devil– than to Prospero himself. Sex between Miranda and the devil's child would people the island with more devil-like life forms and would eradicate any possibility of creating a world in the white man's image of the human. Caliban's failed attempt at raping Miranda occurs before both plays take place, and the encounters between the two characters thereafter only reify the girl's disgust at the slave without Miranda ever saying anything about Caliban's violence. Evidently, Prospero's citations of his sexual transgression

and his inhuman nature are evidence enough to reduce Caliban "[to a] hard rock, whiles [keeping him] from the rest o' th' island" (19).

Biology alone doesn't determine Caliban's ontological inferiority and sexual undesirability. The slave's difference is also placed beyond the world of reason. Miranda doesn't lash out in a defense of her honor as Prospero's child after Caliban confesses his goals in wanting to rape her. Instead, her anger is directed at the nature of the slave's "vile race":

> MIRANDA: Abhorrèd slave,
> Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
> Being capable of all ill. I pitied thee,
> Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
> One thing or other. When thou didst not (savage)
> Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
> A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
> With words that made them known. But thy vile race,
> Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures
> Could not abide to be with; therefore was thou
> Deservedly confined into this rock,
> Who hadst deserved more than a prison.
> CALIBAN
> You taught me language, and my profit on't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language! (*TT* 19).

Miranda teaches Caliban how to speak, bringing him the gift of language because she pitied his "savage" and "brutish" existence where he could not

possibly "know thine own meaning."[12] Gifting Caliban with knowledge itself endowed him with the words necessary to find a purpose, which was not existent before Miranda because he was living a life that was ignorant of its own meaning. As a pedagogue, Miranda uses Caliban as the testing site for measuring the natives' abilities to move in the direction of "goodness" and "good natures," or to continue being that vile race "capable of all ill." The underlying assumption behind her pedagogical project is that the natives are an ill-begotten race from the start, but they are acting brutishly out of an ignorance that could possibly be alleviated with the colonizers' knowledge. Her words imply that the end result of her project was to prove whether or not the natives were capable of being good or were inherently evil. If they were able to be pitied upon, it meant they could be reached through her good nature. The natives' will to accept the gift of language and speak their purpose in life would measure their abilities to recognize that the pedagogue's way to goodness was logically the best way to not live a vile and evil existence. That moment of recognition –not rejecting the gift– would be evidence enough to prove that the natives were capable of reason and could follow in the likes of the good Christians.

[12] This scene changes in *A Tempest*, where it is Prospero who teaches Caliban his language, and Caliban completely denies the attempted rape. "Let me tell you something: I couldn't care less about your daughter," he tells Prospero (*AT* 19).

Caliban does learn and willingly accepts the gift of reason and salvation from his brutish existence, but his vile race overtakes the good natures that accompanied his teacher's language. He fails the test. He learned the language of his masters not to play at being good-natured like them, but to curse the red plague upon them for having made him to learn their language. Now capable of speech, his vile race prevails at the cognitive level, and he refuses to be like them by consciously uttering words meant to destroy Miranda and Prospero. Caliban's submission to colonial pedagogy was in reality a strategic acceptance of the gift of language and Christian reason. His life was already endowed with a purpose before they came to tell him he had no reason to live without them. His agenda was to rid himself of those who came to colonize his island and his life. In turn, his betrayal of the Christians' reason proves to them that it is not possible for the native to possess a proper rationale. The attempted rape of the girl proves that Caliban was not capable of being good. Rather than allowing him to be free to destroy them, either through the red plague or by copulating with the girl, Prospero chains him to a rock where he can be watched and controlled at all times.

Prospero was able to keep his daughter's sexual purity in tact when he prevented him from reproducing with his daughter. Miranda's body,

uncontaminated by Caliban's sex, still personifies the good that he could not achieve by measure of his savage nature. Thus, her pure and good Christian body becomes the tool used by Prospero to measure and inhibit Caliban's access to humanity: sexually violating what is most pure and good on the island meant that he could go against the humanity of the Christians and destroy the very embodiment of reason and goodness. Since both *The Tempest* and *A Tempest* cite the attempted rape of the white woman as the last element used to determine the bonding of Caliban to a rock, Miranda's sexual purity becomes the standard against which the slave's humanity was measured. Had he not wished to violate her body, he would've remained a child-like creature on his way to adulthood endowed with reason and a purpose for good. When Miranda falls in love with Ferdinand, Prospero again uses her body to establish Caliban's inferiority:

> PROSPERO: Silence! One word more
> Shall make me chide thee, if not hate thee. What,
> An advocate for an imposter? Hush!
> Thou think'st there is no more such shapes as he,
> Having seen but him and Caliban. Foolish wench,
> To th' most of men this is a Caliban,
> And they to him are angels (*TT* 24).

He reprimands Miranda's instant desire for Ferdinand, using his reprimand to express his animosity towards the prince for being of higher standing on the royal hierarchy. At the same time, the policing of the woman's desire

serves a different purpose. Prospero's denouncement also rejects her attraction for Ferdinand because he's closer to Caliban in his beastly essence than he is to other European men in their angelic one. Ferdinand's undesirability is akin to Caliban's monstrosity and his status as a slave, making him unworthy of Prospero's daughter. More importantly, Prospero's comparison of the prince with the slave establishes Caliban's absolute lack of access to humanity. Ferdinand is an average human being who is like a Caliban when he is compared to angels, and Caliban is even less than human and further away from angelic in his bestial essence. Woman's sex is what Prospero uses to establish the racial make up and desirability of men, and Caliban is deemed to be less than an undesirable human for the white man's daughter.

Caliban challenges his monstrosity and Prospero's sovereignty over the island by making claims to a native sovereignty inherited from Sycorax, his mother. When his master summons him to the stage, he answers by dismissing Prospero's very presence on his island:

> CALIBAN: I must eat my dinner.
> This island's mine by Sycorax my mother,
> Thou strok'st me and made much of me; wouldst give me
> Water with berries in't; and teach me how
> To name the bigger light, and how the less,
> That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee
> And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle,

> The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile.
> Cursèd be that I did so! All the charms
> Of Sycorax –toads, beetles, bats– light on you!
> For I am all the subjects that you have,
> Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me
> In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
> The rest o' th' island (*TT* 18).

He establishes himself as a native subject and legitimate sovereign of the island in the same scene where the language of white pedagogy and sexuality instructs him to be a savage, a slave and the devil's child of a vile race. The native's language is entirely anti-white: he uses his mother's language and her gods to curse the colonizers of his island for having enslaved him and taught him their language. Slavery makes Caliban no subject at all, so his claim to native subjectivity is inherited from the dead witch mother who is also the rightful ruler of the island. Laying claims to a maternal inheritance endows Caliban with yet another purpose: "Without [Prospero]? I'd be the king, that's what I'd be, the King of the Island. The King of the Island given me by my mother, Sycorax" (*AT* 17). There are two opposing ideologies of power at play here: Prospero's colonial domination that is legitimated through reason and goodness, and Caliban's sovereignty over himself and the island that is legitimated through the mother's access to both magic and nature. Prospero's reign over reason goes against Sycorax's reign over

nature, and only the latter's will make Caliban a sovereign native subject of freedom not bound to a hard rock.

Caliban tries to regain his freedom from prospero by negotiating his subordination to two other white men: Trinculo, the jester, and Stephano, the drunken butler. Trinculo first encounters the slave under a cloak, hiding from the rain in *The Tempest*:

> TRINCULO: What have we here? A man or a fish? Dead or alive? A fish: he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fishlike smell… A strange fish. Were I in England now (as once I was) and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man; any strange beast there makes a man. When they will give a do it to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian. Legged like a man, and his fins like arms… this is no fish, but an islander… (*TT* 37).

Moments later, Caliban awakes scared by Stephano and asks him to not torment him. Stephano, for his part, becomes stupefied when the monster talks to him in his language.

> STEPHANO: What's the matter? Have we devils here? Do you put tricks upon's with savages and men of Ind? I have not scaped drowning to be afeard now of your four legs; for it hath been said, "As proper a man as ever went on four legs, cannot make him give ground"… This is some monster of the isle with four legs, who hath got, as I take it, an ague. Where the devil should he learn our language? I will give him some relief if it be but for that. If I can recover him, and keep him tame, and get to Naples with him, he's a present for any emperor that ever trod on neat's leather (*TT* 38).

Thinking Caliban dead, Trinculo's first instinct is to make a profit by capturing him and selling him in a land where "they will lay out ten [pieces of silver] to see a dead Indian." Thinking Caliban is a four-legged monster and a savage man of India, Stephano wants to capture him and take him back to Italy where he can gift him to an emperor. The discovery of the Indian reduces the islander to a monstrosity that is ready to be captured, tamed and sold on a market where his difference will make his European capturers a profit. The Indian's difference is given a monetary value based on the visuality of his body: Trinculo wants to earn ten pieces of silver in exchange for letting the English see a dead Indian, and Stephano wants to make good with an emperor by giving him a four-legged monster from the island as a present. His exhibition is even more prevalent in Césaire's play, where Trinculo is more explicit in stating his plan to "make him [his] prisoner and take him back to Europe [and] sell him to a carnival, [maybe] show him at fairs." Stephano, for his part, finds "an authentic Nindian from the Caribbean" that can make him a fortune "if [he] showed him at a carnival" (*AT* 40-42). Difference is coded only as far as the European men can see, and what their eyes can't comprehend they deem a spectacular monstrosity. Race is again constituted through exhibition for the sake of exhibition itself when Caliban is made a spectacular Indian. His indigeneity is

of a monstrous essence and a materiality/visuality beyond the white men's human reason.

The white men see him and call him a "moon-calf," "a howling monster" and "a drunken monster," but what Caliban sees in them are beings "dropped from heaven" itself:

> CALIBAN: Hast thou not dropped from heaven?...
> I'll kiss thy foot. I'll swear myself thy subject…
> I'll show you thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries;
> I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough.
> A plague upon the tyrant that I serve!
> I'll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee,
> Thou wondrous man.
> …
> No more dams I'll make for fish,
> Nor fetch in firing
> At requiring,
> Nor scrape trencher, nor wash dish,
> Ban, ban, Ca-caliban
> Has a new master: get a new man.
> Freedom, high-day, high-day freedom, freedom high-day, freedom (*TT* 40, 41).

Beastiality, the desire between the essence of humanity (whiteness) and the materiality of the subhuman (beast/native subject), is entirely at play when the native subject negotiates his access to freedom under the system of racial slavery that in actuality denies him ontological privilege. The scene of subjection establishes the racial difference as a mode of exotic gaze and colonial exhibition: he's closer to fish and deformed cow fetuses and they closer to divine forms. Always beyond what the white men can access and

comprehend as a part of themselves, Caliban is beyond humanity. He is an animal they see in his natural habitat, so they decide they can capture him and sell his body at carnivals, freak shows and royal audiences abroad. This doubling of exhibition, first on the island and then in the continent of Europe, makes Caliban twice removed from the ontological spheres inhabited by his white masters. Ironically, Caliban sees freedom and salvation from Prospero's oppression in this possibility of double exhibition. He positions himself as the servant of these two men dropped from heaven in exchange for his freedom from bondage under Prospero's tyranny of magic. The option for a different kind of subjection under their plans to exhibit him turns into an opportunity for Caliban to negotiate his enslavement on his own terms. In *A Tempest* he goes as far as telling his new masters that he wishes to completely destroy Prospero. Freedom from his first master requires the slave's submission to another one, so in reality his plan of action was not freedom at all. Caliban would still remain bound to a hard rock, only the chains binding him would change.

The visualization of the native's embodied racial difference makes him eligible for exposition as well as salvation from his demonic condition. Césaire rehearses the Requerimiento when he writes a scene that is entirely absent in the original *Tempest*. In the scene, King Alonso and his royal

counselor come to celebrate the Miranda's union with Ferdinand, but when they see "the strangest creature [they've both] ever seen," the celebration turns into the damnation of Caliban by way of a failed conversion.

> ALONSO (*Indicating Caliban*): That is the strangest creature I've ever seen!
> PROSPERO: And the most devilish too!
> GONZALO: What's that? Devilish! You've reprimanded him, preached at him, you've ordered and made him obey and you say he is still indomitable!
> PROSPERO: Honest Gonzalo, it is as I have said.
> GONZALO: Well –and forgive me, counselor, if I give counsel– on the basis of my long experience the only thing left is exorcism. "Begone, unclean spirit, in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." That's all there is to it.
>
> (*Caliban bursts out laughing.*)
>
> You were absolutely right! And more so than you thought… He's not just a rebel, he's a real tough customer! (*To Caliban.*) So much the worse for you, my friend. I have tried to save you. I give up. I leave you to the secular arm! (*AT* 60).

Caliban is the devil's child who must be saved, and if not saved, then enslaved or destroyed. Prospero orders Ariel to bring Caliban to him after he foils the plans to kill him and place Stephano on the throne. The slave's rebellion is another citation of Caliban's betrayal, since Prospero tells him that he only wished to make a man out of the monster and failed. Rebellion is grounds for further punishment, because Prospero has failed to contain Caliban's savagery and turn him into a human being. The monster's body is exhibited as proof of his disobedience and his inhuman nature, two things

which Alonso and Gonzalo are astonished to see materialize in front of them. Gonzalo's immediate response to his vision of the devil incarnate takes punishment to where Prospero has not succeeded: conquering the slave's indomitable spirit who wishes to be free. Gonzalo's and Prospero's exorcism is essentially a reenactment of the Requerimiento: the latter preached reason to Caliban in the name of humanity's goodness, the former tries to bring the gift of spiritual salvation by exorcising him of the devil inside. The attempt to save Caliban's spirit through religious rites proves that not only is Caliban irrational because he rejects the gift, he's also damned in spirit. In the eyes of the European religious saviors, the beast is beyond salvation. This denial of spiritual salvation goes on par with their denial of Caliban's life and freedom. Gonzalo's love speech offering the black slave the gift of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit quickly turns into hate speech when the offer is rejected. He leaves the native "to the secular arm" when his attempted exorcism fails, suggesting that he cannot be saved in spirit nor in physical life, which can now be ended under military law. Racial subjection, in Caliban's case, encompasses both spiritual and embodied damnation.

Caliban rejects Gonzalo's brand of salvation is rejected because it was no salvation at all and it would nevertheless leave the black Caliban enslaved

even if his exorcism had succeeded. Beyond the reach of both racial salvation and freedom, however, Caliban still very much desires freedom. He explains the terms under which he can achieve this in yet another scene that is absent in the original manuscript. In *A Tempest*, before the black slave rejects the Christian gift, he and Ariel fight it out in the colony to see whose vision of freedom is more sustainable.

> ARIEL: Poor Caliban, you're doomed. You know that you aren't the stronger, you'll never be the stronger. What good will it do you to struggle?
>
> CALIBAN: And what about you? What good has your obedience don you, your Uncle Tom patience and your sucking up to him. The man's just getting more demanding and despotic day by day.
>
> ARIEL: Well, I've at least achieved one thing: he's promised me my freedom. In the distant future, of course, but it's the first time he's actually committed himself.
>
> CALIBAN: Talk's cheap! He'll promise you a thousand times and take it back a thousand times. Anyway, tomorrow doesn't interest me. What I want is (*Shouting*) Freedom Now! … The stronger? How do you know that? Weakness always has a thousand ways and cowardice is all that keeps us from listing them.
>
> ARIEL: I don't believe in violence.
>
> CALIBAN: What *do* you believe in, then? In cowardice? In giving up? In kneeling and groveling? That's it, someone strikes you on the right cheek and you offer the left. Someone kicks you on the left buttock and you turn the right… that way there's no jealousy. Well, that's not Caliban's way…
>
> ARIEL: You know very well that's not what I mean. No violence, no submission either. Listen to me: Prospero is the one we've got to change. Destroy his serenity so that he's finally forced to acknowledge his own injustice and put an end to it … I'm not fighting just for *my*

freedom, for *our* freedom, but for Prospero's too, so that Prospero can acquire a conscience. Help me, Caliban.

CALIBAN: Listen, kid, sometimes I wonder if you aren't a little bit nuts. So that Prospero can acquire a conscience? You might as well ask a stone to grow flowers.

ARIEL: I don't know what to do with you. I've often had this inspiring, uplifting dream that one day Prospero, you, me, we would all three set out, like brothers, to build a wonderful world, each one contributing his own special thin: patience, vitality, love, willpower too, and rigor, not to mention the dreams without which mankind would perish.

CALIBAN: You don't understand a thing about Prospero. He's not the collaborating type. He's a guy who only feels something when he's wiped someone out. A crusher, a pulverizer, that's what he is! And you talk about brotherhood!

ARIEL: So then what's left? War? And you know that when it comes to that, Prospero's invincible.

CALIBAN: Better death than humiliation and injustice. Anyhow, I'm going to have the last word. Unless nothingness has it. The day when I begin to feel that everything's lost, just let me get hold of a few barrels of your infernal power and as you fly around up there in your blue skies you'll see this island, my inheritance, my work, all blown to smithereens… and, I trust, Prospero and me with it. I hope you'll like the fireworks display –it'll be signed Caliban.

ARIEL: Each of us marches to his own drum. You follow yours. I follow the beat of mine. I wish you courage, brother.

CALIBAN: Farewell, Ariel, my brother, and good luck (*AT* 27-28).

This is a scene entirely about competing notions of racial freedom: Ariel wants to appeal to Prospero's consciousness (or lack thereof) so that Prospero can undo his injustices and the three of them can create a new world. Caliban's freedom from bondage could come at the expense of

destroying entire worlds, both theirs and Prospero's. For Ariel, freedom is a new relationality between the conqueror and his slaves: love is the way to go, but this form of love cannot account for the undoing of freedom and the processes by which they were denied it in the first place. With a relationality based on love in place, un-freedom will simply be put behind as the three men make a new world where slavery and bondage never existed. Ariel's futurity cannot or will not account for the original unmaking of the native into a mongrel. The future of life between racialized beings in the colony, according to the mulatto slave, resides is a distant time in the distant where his master might give him his freedom from slavery. Even though he wants to make race in a future possibly free from bondage under Prospero, he doesn't see freedom possible in the present. That time of race is not what matters to the black slave, who's only interested in the here and now. What Caliban wants is racial freedom without having to wait until their master agrees to give it to him. Racial freedom can only come today, when it matters most because it is at this point in time that their lives are being threatened, making the future an unlikely possibility should Prospero continue making them his slaves. Ariel's wishful desire for Prospero to give them freedom leaves their future in the hands of the master, which also

leaves the slaves' future of tomorrow in the trenches of slavery and racial bondage. His freedom is potentially not at all.

For Caliban, the future of tomorrow depends on creating their own freedom now because it goes against Prospero's colonizing nature to create it for them. Speaking from the time of slavery, he sees no possible salvation in that brand of freedom from colonial bondage and consciously chooses death over humiliation and injustice. If their humanity continues to be denied to them, the natives' only hope left for salvation is to blow the island to smithereens with him and Prospero still on it.[13] His impulse towards destruction is a mimicry of the Fanonian moment of decolonization: Ariel is anti-violence and, well, that is not Caliban's way. The temporality of racial freedom that Caliban wishes to create is the same movement towards the undoing of colonialism and the making of blackness into humanity that Fanon calls for in *The Wretched of the Earth*. For Fanon, proof of the success of national liberation or decolonization movements only "lies in a social fabric that has been changed inside out," and this "change" is quite simply "always a violent event" (Fanon 1961, 1). Both Fanon and Caliban see racial freedom and violence as part of the same project of emancipation:

[13] Neither Ariel nor Caliban makes a place for Miranda, or any other woman, in their plans for a future free of racial bondage. Their ideas on the futurity of race can only be put into action in a homosocial world where freedom exists among men in the absence of women.

unfreedom, slavery and racial bondage can only be undone in the present for the sake of a future where colonialism and the unmaking of humanity are not the order of the day. In the terrain of colonialism, there is no freedom without violence. A set of questions then arise regarding the nature of the violence that is inherent to Caliban's decolonizing moves: what kind of terror is rehearsed when colonialism is being undone? To what extent is Caliban's way itself caught within a discourse where relationality is always-already anti-relational? Can Caliban give us a way out of tragedy so that life can exist anew now and in the future? In other words, just what is the future of race and relationality when the beast decides to act out his imaginary of decolonization? Ariel doesn't want war because war will end everything, including their own lives. Caliban sees war as the only answer possible, even if "this island, [his] inheritance, [his] work, all blown to smithereens" is all that will be left. Caliban's freedom would mean death.

Césaire's introduction of this question on the temporality of race and freedom is a correlative to Shakespeare's limited engagement with the tragedy of conquest that invented the natives as subjects worthy of extermination. Consciously or not, Shakespeare's play functions as a documentation of how the invention of America took place in the 17th-century. After all, the man wrote down the experiences of slavery and

conquest in a manuscript quite literally providing the directions for a rehearsal of these historical experiences and events. When the Martiniquan playwright rewrites *The Tempest*, the original manuscript essentially becomes an archive documenting those events where the inhabitants of the New World were reduced to a materiality that was not human. The scene of the Requerimiento, with Caliban's rejection of the Christian love speech act and the resulting acts of hate speech, is a transgression on the original document that corrects Shakespeare's limited knowledge of tragedy. Most importantly, the scenes staging the discussion of racial freedom in terms of temporality push beyond the archive to provide us with a possible history of the present. Shakespeare's Caliban was left in the 17th-century as a barbarian that could never possibly think of being free because he was without human reason. Césaire writes him back into the 20th-century to stake a claim against this denial of rationality and resist Prospero until the end of time.

A Tempest closes with the two of them caught in a war until death do them part:

> PROSPERO: And now, Caliban, it's you and me!
> What I have to tell you will be brief:
> ten times, a hundred times, I've tried to save you,
> above all from yourself.
> But you have always answered me with wrath and venom,
> like the possum that pulls itself up by its own tail

the better to bite the hand that tears it from the darkness.
Well, my boy, I shall set aside my indulgent nature
And henceforth I will answer your violence
with violence!

(*Time passes, symbolized by the curtain's being lowered halfway and reraised. In semi-darkness Prospero appears, aged and weary. His gestures are jerky and automatic, his speech weak, toneless, trite.*)

Well, Caliban, old fellow, it's just us two now, here on the island… only you and me. You and me. You-me… me-you! What in the hell is up to? (*Shouting*) Caliban!

(In the distance, above the sound of the surf and the chirping of the birds, we hear snatches of Caliban's song:)

CALIBAN: FREEDOM HI-DAY! FREEDOM HI-DAY!
(*AT* 66).

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Césaire's *A Tempest* are scenarios of conquest rehearsing the processes by which the natives as invented as a racial subjects worthy only of damnation. The difference between their two traditions lies in the crux between modernity/coloniality and anticolonialism: the first one creates them as incapable of escaping damnation, but with Césaire, they at least shout their desire to be free. As time goes on, the conqueror is stuck repeating the duality of "only you and me. You and me. You-me.. me-you!" The conquered closes the play with a desire, a will, and a performance of "FREEDOM." The time of the conquest, in other words, is essentially a

tragic modality that forever repeats itself and circumscribes the native subject within this same temporality.

Freedom and its performative desire undoes this tragic mode of temporal existence when the last word is uttered by Caliban. The utterance of Caliban's "FREEDOM HI-DAY!" is evidence of the monster's racial performativity as he actively seeks a way out of tragic conquest. The slave, in the end, seeks a way out and a path towards achieving his freedom. The curtain drops on the anticolonial stage, and the last word belongs to the slave: he wants to be free. For Fanon, the definition of decolonization can only "be summed up in the well-known words: 'The last shall be the first'" (1961, 2). Caliban's desire for freedom, expressed in the lyrics to his song, is a speech act of decolonization. The anticolonial desire to reach for freedom, beyond the cites/sites of damnation found in the archive, is the Césaire's first step towards decoloniality.

2nd Rehearsal: Freedom

For Wynter, *The Tempest* is a dramatization of the shifting of sociality from sexual to racial difference that took place with the discovery of the Americas. This mutation of the social world is most clearly played out in Caliban's subjection to both Miranda and Prospero:

> Caliban [was] an incarnation of a new category of the human, that of subordinated "irrational" and "savage" *native* […] now constituted as the lack of the "rational" Prospero, and the now capable-or-rationality-Miranda, by the Otherness of his/its *physiognomic* "monster" difference, a difference which now takes the *coding* role of sexual-anatomic difference, with the latter now made into a mimetic parallel effect of the former, and as such a member of the *set* of differences of which the former has now become the primary "totemic operator" (Wynter 1990, 358).

Caliban's attempted rape and his resulting slavery deny the native both humanity and masculinity when heterosexual copulation is prohibited. Since and the only sexual relationship allowed is that of Miranda and Ferdinand, Caliban's slavery also denied him access to a masculinity that could be heterosexual and interracial. His existence within "the global order that [was] put into place following upon the 1492 arrival of Columbus in the Caribbean" (360) meant his desire could not be mapped onto the colonial world because he had no female equal with which to fulfill his heterosexuality and masculinity. Just as important, Caliban's unfulfilled desire for a mate also meant that no other being existed for him to have sex and procreate with. Indeed, "Caliban's 'Woman'" was "the ontologically absent genitrix –Caliban's mate– of another population of the human" (360).

As Wynter's logic goes, Caliban's first act of rebellion was his attempt at reproducing himself and his vile race by impregnating Miranda. By protecting her, Prospero and Ferdinand prevented her becoming "the

potential genitrix of a 'race' which" could've inherit the monster's "purely sensory nature" should Caliban have succeeded in producing his progeny (Wynter 1990, 361). The absence of Caliban's woman ensures that he can never produce a group made of the same irrational materiality as his own. Denying him access to biological reproduction further negates ontological privilege to Caliban and those made in his image, insuring that only those made in the image of Prospero and Miranda can legitimately desire and possess reason. The silencing of a Caliban's Woman framed the category of the human in light of an oppressive regime of colonialism. Black and Caribbean women writers, she says, offer an alternative mode of being human by asserting new models of cognition. As the inheritors of a legacy of conquest, they write within a mode of speech that makes present "that [original] absence of speech both as women (masculinist discourse) and as 'native' women (feminist discourse)" (365). Wynter's brand of decoloniality espoused in her argument makes black and Caribbean women into the embodiment of "Caliban's 'Woman'" and the ideological mates with which to reproduce his ontological condition, but with a difference. Rather than being his progeny denied ontological privilege by slavery and whiteness, the "demonic model" of Caliban's Woman is that cognitive imperative to produce an episteme (364). These women's episteme is demonic because it

takes place despite their being placed in ontological inferiority to Western knowledge. Claiming a kind of native sovereignty over epistemology in the New World, these women exist at the limits of a Postcoloniality that doesn't take gender into account, and at the limits of a Western feminism that doesn't account for race as well as gender and sexual difference. Caliban's progeny is indeed demonic: Black and Caribbean women embody native life forms endowed with reason, and it is within reason that are set to remake the category of the human and restore Caliban to ontological and epistemological privilege.

Wynter's essay and her long history of intellectual work has been foundational to generations of postcolonial and feminist theorists, including my own. The radicality of her work, particularly in "Beyond Miranda's Meanings," lies in the potential for theorizing the human outside of a humanity conditioned through colonial relations. The potential of Caliban's Woman is her episteme's correlative to Eurocentric philosophies denying race ontology and epistemology. As Caliban's equal, Caliban's Woman also exists in the racial formations that invented Caliban in the first place, but in producing a speech act from the historical absence of their speech, they are positioned lower on the scale of humanity that colonialism put in place. If Caliban had no reason or humanity, and Caliban's Woman is entirely absent

even in Caliban's world, then native women were further denied their humanity because they did not exist at all in Shakespeare's Renaissance imaginary nor Césaire's Anticolonialism. Speaking from the limits of modernity and coloniality, Caliban's Woman is a radical speech act of race, otherwise.

What is also evident in Wynter's decolonial imaginary is that she is theorizing both race and gender as strictly heterosexual when she reduces women –native women in particular– to their sex. Caliban's Woman can only exist because she says Caliban needed a mate with which to biologically reproduce. Native women be capable of reason and brought to life only if they are heterosexual women desiring to copulate with Caliban, and willing to employ their uterus in the slave's plan to "[people] this isle with Calibans" (*TT* 19). Wynter's imaginary of racial, sexual and gender relations is founded on these women's cognitive abilities to *think* and *be* at the limits of the colonial order of things, but it doesn't make it possible for colonial/postcolonial women to also *act* and *be* with the same radical potential. Caliban's Woman thinks at the limits, but her body is still bound to these limits; she does not perform her ontology, she thinks it. Just as importantly, she leaves native women partaking in the same ciclicity of tragic time that Caliban lives in. As his progeny and progenitors, native women are

bound to relive the tragedy Shakespeare and Césaire tell us is the only future possible. Decoloniality, in this scenario, does not mean that freedom for the damned can be achieved yet.

A correlative to Wynter and Caliban's tragic time is a gift that comes to the damned in the hands of Migdalia Cruz, one of today's most prolific and widely produced Latina playwrights. Previous studies of Cruz's work have emphasized the abundance of women's lives conditioned by violence, sexuality, desire, and race.[14] *Fur* (1997) is exemplary of this discourse in that the plays' protagonists exist in a deadly triangle of love, racial bondage, and sexual desire. In the play, Michael is a white man who buys a beast, Citrona, and imprisons her in a cage where Nena, a hairless Latina with a beautiful face, feeds her the animals she has trapped. Michael desires the beast, Citrona falls in love with Nena, and Nena desperately wants Michael to desire her beautiful body instead. The simplicity of the storyline betrays the complexity of *Fur*'s intertextuality, as the play is seemingly inspired by the colonialism of Shakespeare's 17th-century and Césaire's anticolonialism in the 20th-century. No study of her oeuvre, however, has yet to address the Latina's stage haunted by Caliban's legacy condemning blackness to a thing

[14] Tiffany Ana López (2000) has written of the persistent connections between community formations and the perpetration of violence on Latina women's bodies throughout Cruz's plays. Most recently, Analola Santana (2009) has theorized the place of agency and love in two of these plays, *Miriam's Flowers* and *Fur*. Santana's is the only essay published to date that focuses on *Fur*.

of damnation. I locate *Fur*'s potential to perform a decolonial imaginary precisely when and where Wynter cannot: Citrona is bound to tragedy by her masters, but when she sees her body's right to love constricted even when she's let out of her cage, she kills the ones who imprisoned her inside it and only then is she completely free. In Citrona, what we have is a Caliban who sees the option for racial salvation through cannibalism. The beast cannibalizes both her white master and the other colonial subject after Michael makes it clearly evident that same sex love between the two Latinas is an impossible desire. Her only access to freedom from colonial terror is to not speak at all, but to shatter the speech act and lash out in a savage vengeance. Freedom, I argue, means the ability to perform ontology without and outside of subalternity.

The curtain rises on *Fur*'s stage with Michael and Nena inside "a sideshow carnival tent [and sitting] in front of a moving image of sideshow freaks, all mutations of humans with animals, such as a snakeskin man, a woman with the head of a pig, a dog-faced boy, etc… Nena gazes at Michael who watches the images, enrapt in them" (*F* 77). While she is fully enveloped in watching him, he is only concerned with the display of freaks: "There's a new one today. I haven't seen her yet, but I bet she's a beauty," he says (77). The absent freak already has an audience waiting impatiently to

gaze his eyes on it, a man who thinks of her alterity in terms of desire. He anticipates that the freak is both female and beautiful by the simple act of being different from him. In the exhibition scene, the one holding the gaze is the one who gets to give meaning to alterity because he is positioned at the center of the spectacle: the freaks are exhibited for him to see, he is not being exhibited for their sake. Exposition and alterity define the relational field between the one watching and the ones being watched, and they are only there to entertain his erotic fantasies. Nena, neither a carnival freak on display or the one buying them from the sideshow, exists outside of this field of alterity in that she does not at all partake in Michael's vision. Beyond his gaze, she does not exist. The absent freak, however, exists even in absence because Michael has already defined what her alterity means –beauty.

He is able to materialize this absence cognitively because he knows that whatever is about to be exhibited is already different from him, and what is different from him he defines as at thing made of a beautiful essence. Michael buys the freak, which first comes on stage as "a large, unseen animal in a sack" (*F* 78), trapped and kept safely at the white man's reach. All he has to do is talk to it and serve it water from a distance:

> MICHAEL: C'mon beauty. Let me stroke you. Let me rub my hands against your fur. I like furry things. They keep you warm. You could keep me warm… You are so pretty. You have soft eyes –soft brown eyes. You make me melt

> with eyes like that– when you look at me like that. You know things about me. You know how to make me feel better… You don't have to be afraid. No one will touch you … no one but me. I won't let anyone harm you anymore. When you're at Joe's nobody can hurt you. Animals are the business of my inheritance. Joe left this shop to me. You'll make me happy. I know you will. I never would have guessed that love would cost so little… Your mother doesn't have a mind for business. She told me to keep you in cage. "She's a wild one," she said. But if you'll love me I'll set you free. Love me and I'll build you a palace (*F* 78).

The speech act of love is also a speech act of hate: I promise to love you if you accept my love and love me back, but I will keep you in a cage until you do. The caging of the beast is an act of love, but only insofar as it is an act of self-love for Michael. Love is only possible if it always relates back to him, and the beast is to remain in bondage until she reflects back to him. As a messenger and deliverer of God's creation, Michael is bringing the beast a taste of salvation, but her freedom from bondage comes only if she'll love him. Salvation and freedom produce love on contradictory terms. First, the moment that freedom is offered, love becomes a means for establishing bondage by other means: "I'll set you free" to love me, otherwise you will always be my prisoner and pet. The transference from one system of slavery to another system of bondage, from imprisoning the beast-human in the cage to owning her once she freely agrees to love him, inevitably sets the ontological conditions of Citrona's existence in inverse mode. In loving

Michael, Citrona would no longer be the beast-human trapped in the cage, but a human being who is allowed to be free under Michael's gaze. She would be human within the relation of love, but she would still be his property. The only difference between the beast-human and the human-beast conditions of her existence would be determined by her position inside or outside of the cage. Secondly, there is also the possibility of threat on Citrona's life should she not heed Michael's desire. His salvation of Citrona borders on the possibility of further damnation: no one but him will touch and harm her. In the name of love, hate remains ever more on the horizon of racial salvation.

Michael is not a furry in that he doesn't want to have sex dressed as an animal, but in that he wants the animal itself. His erotic fantasy of love is bestiality fulfilled.

> MICHAEL: I wasn't looking for love I wanted to see the sights. The ones I never saw before. That's what sideshows show you. Things, people, you'd never otherwise see.
> NENA: I've seen things there too –you found an animal there?
> MICHAEL: I found my wife. My woman. When she sang "I wanna Hold Your Hand" –the world stopped moving on its axis. For a moment. For a moment, I felt her hand in mine and when I touched her I felt happy… I mean, I imagined I touched her. Other people laughed –looked at her and laughed. Her mother laughed the loudest. That's when I knew… I had to save her. Help me, Nena (*F* 83).

The reason behind Michael's presence at the sideshow was not love, but a purely self-satisfying experience. He wanted to see things and people he never see otherwise, and only in the sideshow freaks could he discover both things and people he had never encountered before. He went there to partake in the spectacle not as audience member unconscious of his subjectivity, but as someone who had already reasoned his will and ability to own people. Instead, his purchasing power makes his participation in the carnival's exposition of ontological alterity into a rehearsal of scenarios of discovery. The white man is there and makes his presence visible as a discoverer extraordinaire who's come to own the things and people he did not already own in his collection of pets.

Michael's voyeuristic gaze and purchasing of racial difference partakes in a spectacle of whiteness. He went there not looking for love per se, but he did go to the sideshow to access the things and people he desired because they were exotic to him. In the singing beast he finds love defined as the relationality between him and his wife-woman, as well as the essence of love itself manifested in the fetishized object –wife, woman, animal. Michael goes into an uncontrolled imaginary frenzy where the woman's voice makes his world stop in her track, and he is able to fantasize about how happy he would feel by touching the young hirsute Latina. The discovery of the

singing animal on display sends him to a world where the mere touch of the exotic makes him happy as never before. Happiness, it seems, is a feeling unbeknown to him before a hairy brown woman comes on stage and sings The Beatles' "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" for the audiences of the sideshow. The beast's performance drives him mad with desire by its spectacular display of alterity. In turn, he projects his own imaginary onto the scene: he feels love for a beastly woman trapped as the carnival's freak, and she is waiting for him to come to her rescue. The salvation of the Latina from exhibition would also liberate her from being laughed at for being the carnival's hairy woman, ridding her of her so-called-abnormality. Citrona's animality, however, is a double-edged sword: her hairy body makes her a thing to be laughed at and she is thought to need salvation at the hands of the white man, but Michael loves her precisely because her hirsute brown body makes her exotic to his world. Liberation at the hands of whiteness is no form of racial salvation at all, because after he buys her and liberates the freak from the display cage at the carnival, Citrona is imprisoned in a different cage in the basement of Michael's pet shop. Racial salvation, in this case, is part of a spectacle of whiteness doubling as an act of colonial terror.

Citrona is held prisoner inside the cage and watched over by Michael for the majority of *Fur*'s duration. Every part of her daily living is always

there for him to see, and her exhibition reproduces the original scene of subjection that allowed him to own and define her life. The white man is free to reduce her privacy to a public exhibition and to produce her alterity as a matter of public visibility. She is imprisoned in the cage as the object of his gaze, so her livelihood is a performance that allows him to see her in his man-made natural habitat. Even in an oppressive world of racial difference, however, Citrona is nonetheless able to produce herself as a site of an erotics exclusive of her master's cruelty:

> CITRONA: When it's dark nobody can see me. I'm not ugly in the dark. I can touch myself then. I can stand to let my fingers part myself and touch my crown. You know what? That's the only thing I touch (*F* 80-81).

Michael tells Citrona that he wants to call her "Beauty," but she rejects the offer to change her into what he wants her to be. She only thinks of herself as not an ugly freak when she feels she is not being watched, and she touches herself in the one part of her body that Michael has not expressed desire for. The man erotizes her because her body is covered with black hair and she has dark-colored eyes, so he only erotizes what he can see. In the privacy of her own body, even though he is watching without her knowing, Michael cannot see that most intimate of her body parts. For Citrona, her erotic performance is an act of self-love and it takes place in isolation, thinking this is the privacy of her entrapment and not realizing that Michael

is watching her from the basement window. For Michael, the privacy of self-love becomes a voyeuristic spectacle as he watches his trapped Latina love herself in the most intimate of ways, and polices both her racial identity and her sexuality from afar. Racial bondage, in this case, is also a kind of sex trafficking where the Latina is robbed of the privacy of intimate self-love for the sake of an oppressive public that is making intimacy the thing of exhibition.

The raciality of the exhibition also makes the colonized subject's pleasure into an erotics of conquest. The enslaved Latina learns to find pleasure and love in herself by herself in the same moment that she is robbed of the power of intimacy and self-love by her master. Citrona first learns the meaning of love through her mother, the one who sexually mutilated her before she sold her at the carnival.

> CITRONA**:** I wanted love and I used to dream about that. I had dreams where my mother would hold me. I had dreams all the time. I don't dream anymore. I don't remember how to sleep. I don't sleep because I'm a monster and monsters are hard to love… People said I should be on a TV show for gifted animals. I knew the words to every Beatles' song every written and I could divide big numbers in my head –it was a gift. I was born with a caul –that's a sign of prophecy. People used to steal them to steal the power of the child and the mother. My mother kept mine in a glass case. It looked like a rotting cobweb. But it kept Mother from killing me –that's what she told me anyway. She knew I was here for a purpose –even though I was too ugly to love. That birth sac was my

> strength. My survival. Mother waited for me to tell her future. I could only see what would happen after she died. She didn't like that.
>
> She hit me so many times on the head that I lost my gift. I lost my hymen too. Mother thought it best. She pierced me with a letter opener made of wood, then she sold me (*F* 90-91).

Citrona's relationship with her mother recalls Caliban's magical island and its original owner. The mother never comes on stage in *Fur* or in both versions of *The Tempest*, but although forever absent, Syrcorax nonetheless appears as a formidable force throughout all three plays. In Caliban's case, Sycorax is that powerful witch who controls the island prior to Prospero's arrival. The power of the female character legitimates Prospero's status as invader of the island and Caliban's claim to colonized status. That is perhaps the most important reason for Caliban's hailing of the absent witch mother as the source of his inheritance: in both Shakespeare's and Cesaire's versions of Caliban's story, the beast always states his claims to native sovereignty vis-à-vis Sycorax's magical domination of the island's native inhabitants, including Ariel. Magic and the feminine join in Sycorax to establish Caliban's native sovereignty, but these are always left on the backburner and never given center stage, which is occupied by Prospero and Caliban in their perpetual fight for possession of the witch's island.

In contrast to Caliban's thoroughly masculine interpellation of the witch mother, Cruz makes Citrona the one who wields magical powers. Sycorax emerges in Latina theatre not to legitimate the slave's native subjectivity, but to reveal herself as the natives' source of violence, hate and the threat of murder. The Latina's livelihood doesn't depend on her absent mother's legitimate right to sovereignty, but on Citrona's rejection of the deadly mother altogether. Citrona can only tell the future after the mother's death, and this exclusion of the mother from the future signifies the very possible death at the hands of the beast. In turn, since the power of prophecy excludes her from the future of the living, Citrona's mother desired the magic imbued in Citrona's caul and she destroyed it when she could not own it. Magic, in the Latina's case, means not the claims to a native inhabitance with which to challenge the colonizer's violence, but the tools with which the beast can resist the origins of her birth beckoning her death and marking her as hideously unlovable.

Furthermore, while Caliban adores his mother and wishes her back from the world of the dead, Citrona's mother would wish the beastly daughter dead and far away from her. The mother abuses her both physically and sexually because she is unwilling to kill her daughter: "She hit me so many times I lost my gift. I lost my hymen too. Mother thought it best. She

pierced me with a letter opener made of wood, then she sold me" (*F* 91). The loss of sexual purity and the loss of magical ontology are both lost at the hands of the mother who wished to rob the girl of her strength and reason for existence: "She knew I was there for a purpose … that birth sac was my strength." Depriving Citrona of her sex and her celestial powers do not make her less valuable and desirable on the market of the sideshow, however. On the contrary, she becomes a more profitable transaction for the mother when she is displayed as a hairy woman who once held magical powers. As an already defiled female body, the Latina girl is sold on the market as always-already the receptacle of sexual violence for whoever buys her from the freak show. When Michael buys the Latina on display, the primary sexual conquest will not be his because the beast's mother was the first one to lust after the magical power (once) held in Citrona's caul and vagina. Rape, in this case, is a thoroughly incestual act meant to increase the mother's possibility of a future where she does exist as a sovereign, albeit one that holds a sovereignty violently exercised over her own daughter's freedom. Both her mother and master define Citrona within an ideology of racial and sexual alterity and place her outside of humanity. The girl is too ugly to love as a human being, and only as a beast on exhibition can she have meaning.

Citrona finds love somewhere else and first unlearns her subaltern ontology by touching herself in the crown. Her performance of self-love denies both her mother and master as the proper venues for her to want and dream about love. Her rejection of the gifts of love under cruelty is also a first step towards a performance of ontology within a relational field of alterity –she loves herself, but she also loves herself in relation to the other. Michael hires Nena to hunt for Citrona's food and to and clean up after her, and Citrona falls in love with Nena without caring that she is in love with her master. The first time Nena gets near the cage to feed the beast, Citrona grabs her by the ankle to tell her how attractive she is:

> CITRONA: Fine bones. The bones of a well-bred lady. A sweet high-born beauty. Ankles of ivory. An elephant would kill for your tusks, baby. Hey, hey, I know I got a bad skin condition, but the hair covers it right up. Touch it. My face is smooth for something covered in thick, black fur… (*F* 84).

Her attempt at enamoring Nena is to compliment her bone structure, ankles and good genes as beautiful as the whiteness of ivory. She reduces her body to what an animal would find succulent food, not realizing that this metaphor plays into Nena's fears that beast will devour her. Although she fails to seduce the other woman, Citrona does identify herself as something other than a carnivorous animal. Instead of agreeing with Nena that she is the beast that could potentially eat her body and leave only her bones

behind, she says she has a smooth face regardless of the medical condition that covers her skin with thick black fur. If Nena's good genes giver her a delicious bone structure and a beautiful body, then Citrona's genes give her a face that could compliment Nena's beauty regardless of the bad skin condition. The pairing of her biological impediment with the other's biological perfection sets them as potential equals in the world of the cage. She recognizes her subaltern position living as a caged animal, but she makes her animality as equally desirable as Nena's human perfection.

Citrona wants Nena to recognize her as her potential lover, despite her being covered in blood after she devours the dead animals. Disregarding "the smell of blood and shit and urine [that] makes Nena gasp and gag," she asks her to acknowledge her sexually:

> CITRONA: Hey … hey. Talk to me. Talk to me. Hey —you know what? You're beautiful. You smell good. You smell like rain. You bring rain with you when you come here. You bring cold, hard rain. I like that. You know what? I like that. You spray me when you come in. You spray me like grass. I'm grass that's not supposed to be alive. Like there's concrete covering me, so people think I'm dead. But I'm not because you get here and then I feel the blood in my arms again. It all starts to move. It moves and it feels like it's gonna come out through my fingertips. The tips get real hard and read. And I think I'm just gonna burst outta them —all of me reaching through myself and exploding. And you know what? I'm not like this — (*She points at the pieces of animal on the floor.*) I'm white inside. I'm a moon and I want to orbit you. Okay? You know, orbit? Bit. Let me bite you. You're so

> beautiful. You're so beautiful. I could eat you right up. You know what? I get so wet when you come here. Because you're rain, right? Is that why? Is that why I keep hoping? I got too much hair on my arms probably… For you to love me (*F* 88-89).

Nena is hired to treat Citrona like an animal that must be fed and cleaned up after, not as someone with whom she could have a conversation. The only way the beautiful Latina is to relate to the hairy one is as her keeper, not to engage with her as a living human being who feels as much as she does. Since the sensations surging through her body when she's in Nena's presence make her feel alive and want to exist in her orbit, it is precisely through feelings and emotions that Citrona relates to her keeper. Nena comes into the basement, but she does not enter the cage out of fear that she will get too close to Citrona's hungry mouth. All Citrona wants is to be get Nena to talk to her, get past her hairy body, and recognize that she is not made of the same material as the dead animals laying around her. The sensations she feels as a result of Nena's presence produce her animality as a thing made of human flesh and living blood as much as Nena is. Citrona is white inside, just like Nena.

On the one hand, the equation of humanity with whiteness is a questionable move on Citrona's part. Seeing Nena as her potential social and sexual mate makes Citrona her equal, but Citrona's humanity can only be

measured insofar as Nena's humanity is partnered with her racial privilege. The beast wants to be recognized as equally white as her keeper. On the other hand, the beast contradicts herself when her wish for human recognition is presented along the same lines as carniverosity. Biting Nena would let her access the embodiment of beauty and white humanity, so she keeps hoping that Nena will hear her voice and listen to her pleading. The call for recognition is destructive because it requires that an embodiment higher up in the scale of humanity (the white Latina) listen to and account for the existence of a homunculus whose body is covered in thick black hair (the cannibal Latina). Recognition for Nena means putting her life at risk by allowing the beast the opportunity to get close enough to bite her. Recognition for Citrona means having the opportunity to be loved for what she truly is: a human who's been conditioned to see psychic attachment (love) as synonymous with eating the other's body. Citrona's act of cannibalism exemplifies a relational field of sociality where love is defined as the interiorizing the other into the self after the other has recognized you as equal. The self in her ideal love does not recognize herself as the other in alterity; it recognizes herself without alterity because she eats the other she could potentially recognize *as* herself. Cannibalistic love erases the other when the beast devours her, but it also erases the self as well because, after

eating the Nena's flesh, Citrona will not have the other to make her feel alive. Her body will be fed, but the loving of the self will not be nourished at all.

Love is impossible in this scenario with the cage holding unequal relations of power in place. Citrona can only speak from inside the cage and imagine the world beyond the bars along the same structure of power as her imprisonment. Inside the cage, she can only imagine the social world as one structured through colonialism.

> CITRONA: I never thought I'd really want someone to smell my real smell. I thought if I covered it up, built a cloud of other animals' smells over me, then I could save the real me –the real smell of me– for someone I thought could love me … And could stand that smell –even want it on her. Maybe even long for it … (*F* 104).

Citroana has been conditioned to live in a world where the social is always framed around establishing the incommensurability of racial difference, but her dreams of love want someone to recognize her *in* difference. Love is the only way that Citrona will learn to recognize her true self and to allow others to recognize her as well. She feels she belongs in her own skin in feeling the other embrace her true smells. When she hungers for Nena, however, love as an act of recognition fails entirely because she thinks of love as always a move towards erasing the difference between her and the other two people. Meanwhile, "love" means very different things for Nena and Michael. For

Nena, love from Michael means self-satisfaction and recognition that she is beautiful, while love from Citrona means nothing but a tool she can manipulate to reach Michael's love. For Michael, love from Nena is nothing but a means to reach Citrona's love; love from Citrona is his way of fulfilling his oppressive power. A recognition of the self in alterity is impossible as an act of freedom in all three scenarios, and they all leave Citrona in the cage.

Michael eventually arranges a date for Nena to visit Citrona inside the cage. Once she is inside, Citrona flirts with Nena and the latter plays into the seduction game, only to remind the beast that she would never love her because she finds her hideously undesirable. The beast kisses her and Nena faints when she faces the possibility of her death in Citrona's mouth. Michael takes advantage of the rejection to get Citrona to kill Nena with the same letter opener used to rape her, and afterwards Citrona eats Nena inside the cage. The first scene of cannibalism allows Citrona to destroy her first master that denied her recognition of humanity –Nena rejects her love because she is a monster, so the monster eats her. With the object of Citrona's love now gone, Michael sets her free in hopes of getting her to marry and love him for eternity. Instead, Citrona eats him as well when she steps outside of the cage.

His purchasing of Citrona out of love for human sideshow flesh gives Citrona the freedom from this forced exhibition, as well as salvation from future maternal violence. Citrona's salvation from racial imprisonment, however, comes through the beast's own hands when she devours Michael the moment he sets her free from the cage and still denies her full-fledged freedom. Willingly turning into a cannibal, Citrona unbinds Caliban from his never-ending slavery by devouring the white man and the hairless Latina who treated her as a carnivorous animal in the first place. Michael sets her free from the cage so she can love him and no one else, and she lashes out violently against him because his demands continue to constrain her freedom. Even when she's free of physical bondage to him, Citrona's freedom does not mean that she has been released from the mode of relationality where she is always Michael's subordinate. Consuming the bodies of her keeper and her master gives her an exit from the colonial order of things and a life outside of punishment. Caliban may not have been able to kill Prospero in *A Tempest* when his master tells him to drive his sword through his bare chest, but his plan to destroy everything so he can be free is fulfilled by his female equal. Where the black slave fails, the Latina succeeds by killing the one who wanted her to love him precisely as a beast. Salvation

from racial oppression, in the Latina's case, comes through the destruction of bondage and exhibition.

For Cruz, "the protagonist in *Fur*, Citrona, though considered a disposable piece of human sideshow flesh, comes to realize her own power through the act and reaction of love," while Nena and Michel "[act out] in 'beastly' ways to get the object of their affections to love them (Cruz 2000, 72). Building on the playwright's theorizing of love, I argue that *Fur* is about sexual desire as much as it is about relationality between subjects whose lives are organized by colonial relations. Damnation and love go hand-in-hand in each of these scenarios that ended by inducing negative emotions and painful physical reactions in the protagonist. Her mother sexually mutilates her because Citrona's gift of prophecy foretold her death; she could not love the messenger of death, even if it was her own daughter. A mutilated Citrona is what Michael buys so he can possess the exotic-ness of the Latina woman, but the play is about his constant patience waiting for Citrona to love him. Michael's was a brand of love that made her inferior in both race and freedom. The love he feels for the beast, entrenched in colonialism as it is, is also about a kind of relation that is not the conqueror coming to rape or to force the colonized into loving him. What he desires is for a connection to sociality between him and the mutilated beast he has just bought, a relation

where he is not free to overpower her emotions, even if he does trap her body. The beast's psychic attachment to her master is what Michael wants because the master has already fallen for the salve, and the slave rejects him completely. In turn, the slaves fall in love with each other. Citrona lusts after the "woman who could be her twin –if only Citrona were as hairless as [Nena]" (Cruz 2000, 73). Nena is also attracted to Citrona, but she rejects the beast's loving offer when she wants to kiss her. In the end, the beast overpowers them all, leading the play to end in darkness.

As with Caliban's prophesized scene of darkness, *Fur* also leaves the subject of coloniality without a future beyond damnation. Nena envisions the time of love between women and holds the potential for a future beyond the bonds of Michael's colonizing desire, but their master refuses to abandon the women's imaginary and their material conditions under his servitude. The Latina's cannibalism, committed under Michael's guise, makes the time of same-sex desire and a different relationality between slaves without a master an impossible scenario. As the only way to exit the tragedy of conquest, the black slave's project of destruction becomes the ultimate act of hate speech when Citrona kills all life around her and ends her days in isolation without knowing the feeling of intimacy (love) she so desired. Indeed, life for the cannibal free from slavery is a world where race means a

different anti-relational mode of damnation. Freedom abounds, but salvation is nowhere near the horizon of possibility.

The scenes of damnation rehearsed by Shakespeare, Césaire and Cruz stage salvation in opposition to the Requerimiento. In its 16th-century mode, the Requerimiento's Christian salvation meant subordination and death for the natives should they reject the conquistadors' gift of love/hate. In its 20th-century mode, Citrona's and Caliban's rebellious acts are essentially the act of Christian salvation in reverse. Citrona rejects Michael's gift of love and answers him with a final gift of hate in return. She saves herself from subordination and death by cannibalizing both the man who bought her at the freak sideshow, and the woman who treated her as an embodiment of all that was abominable. Still, in both modes the conquerors and the damned sought out salvation as a necessary element of the colonial project. The white men thought the natives where irrational heathens who out to be saved through the word of Christ, with their loving claims bringing good to the New World. Caliban and Citrona, the natives, did not think themselves in need of salvation until after the white men conquered them in the name of Christian love. Caliban wants freedom from this tragedy so he can be his own king on his mother's island, and killing Prospero would mean he would be free to go back to a pre-colonial world as if the white man had never set

foot on island soil. His plan of freedom doesn't include salvation because with Prospero dead, the tragedy he created would altogether seize to impact life on the native's island. In turn, Citrona's experience makes Caliban's decolonization an unfinished project because the terms of her freedom are unsatisfying. Her freedom from racial bondage and her entrance into darkness mean that freedom from slavery is not enough to constitute new life, and that neither is a new kind of life untouched by colonialism possible once the master has been killed. Cruz's native subject also ends her days floating in a sea of blackness, hollering for ontological privilege still. Living in isolation, Citrona's decolonizing violence suggests that salvation depends on more than an ideological redefinition of freedom on native terms. Salvation from damnation also depends on the redefinition of the relational field along the lines of racial alterity.

Dress Rehearsal: Salvation

Cruz's ideal of love, however, is the decolonial option that fails to propel race beyond a tragic temporality. I turn to Nao Bustamante's performance art where salvation and a new mode of relationality are made possible through race. Bustamente's *Indig/urrito* was the Chicana artist's response to the call for art commemorating 1492 and its invention of the

Indian as genocide-ready in 1992. Unlike *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit...*, performed by Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña that same year, *Indig/urrito* was not interested in playing off the audiences' fears of racial difference by terrorizing them with what they feared most.[15] Instead, she strapped-on a burrito and dared to summon white men to partake in a ritual of purification, a ceremony that would absolve them of their sins committed when indigenous people were invented as pagan worshippers eligible for damnation centuries earlier. As a ritual of salvation, her call was to challenge both natives and the inheritors of the colonizer's legacy of whiteness to take a step away from living a tragedy, and to take a step towards a future where race can be done differently. Salvation from the sins of tragedy came from inside a burrito she strapped onto her semi-nude body, and consuming it would remedy their tragic flaws, not the Indians' supposed irrationality and lack of humanity. Her performance in brownface, in other words, was designed to rehearse the original scenes that took place in the colony through an ideological apparatus that inversed the order of colonial interpellation. More importantly, salvation came to them as an act of love without hate. Salvation-as-love was the decolonial option offered to them by a woman with an Indian phallus.

[15] See chapter three, "Spectacular Indians: Artaud and the Cruelty of Latino Performance."

To a certain extent, *Indig/urrito* was celebratory of historical tragedy in that Bustamante decided to dress herself as an Indian in exchange for funding sources for her project. She adorned her body with props standing in for stereotypical indigenous dress so she could play at being Indian for the sake of art (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1
Bustamante and a willing participant.

Her body appeared on theatre stages throughout the U.S. wearing few articles of clothing, and she sometimes wore an Aztec headdress. At first sight, she seemingly appears to her white audiences exactly as how history

has told us Columbus and other conquerors after him saw the natives for the first time: naked because they were without European clothes. However, rather than uncritically rehearsing the Indian of the Arawak man's exhibition and the Requerimiento's racial speech acts, Bustamante's was a spectacularity that could act-be from a site not found in the archive of colonial history. The Indian invented by Columbus, Christian love, the Valladolid trial, and then rehearsed by theatre and performance artists to our present day, cannot exit the time of tragedy because the archive and its repertoire have not quite succeeded in working through a tragic temporality. Citrona's cannibalism is no different –her freedom means that her future is still in darkness. Therein lies the difference between the cruelties of Latino theatre and performance: the anticolonial stage has reproduced cruelty's colonial roots and its artists aren't able to move beyond the colonialism they set out to undo; Bustamante's performance isn't theatre of cruelty proper in that she is invested in saving bodies and lives, not inducing negative public affect that could change the meaning of life for the worst. *Indig/urrito* does treat bodies racialized in the present by an un-resolvable experience of the Conquest, but salvation between Bustamante's Indian and her white audiences took place within a temporal mode altogether different. With a future made from tragedy but invented beyond the limits of tragic temporality, the gift of

salvation was an ideology of indigeneity only possible within the decolonial imaginary, not anticolonialism and decolonization.

Indig/urrito rehearses an intimately familiar mode of inventing Indians when the artist tells her audiences that "[she'd] like to think of [her performance] not as audience participation so much as audience salvation." Like the protocol summoning indigenous people to subordinate themselves to the Spanish regime of law, the brown priestess conditions bodies to think of her own body "as the representation of the modern indigenous peoples." While the burrito on its own is not endowed with life, its attachment to the woman's crotch makes the prop a part of her living body. The materiality of the burrito and the materiality of the woman are now joined to make one singular form of corporeality – a female body with a phallus gone brown like the color of the artist. She says the burrito represents modern indigenous people while holding up the burrito on a silver platter for her audiences to see. She straps it on only after a group of men has decided to go up to the stage and lined up behind her. The propped representation becomes an embodiment when the scene of the Requerimiento has been properly set up: a group of white men have reported to meet the Indian and a gift has been offered. The bodies being hailed are now racialized as white, and the Indian is the one bringing them the gift. The speech act hails her audiences as

bodies in need of salvation, which is only possible in the act of recognizing that what and who is calling them into being is an Indian. They move to a position on the stage where they are asked to consciously accept the terms of their subjection: the woman with the strap-on burrito is an Indian, and they must heed her call so that they can be saved. Her call to action is not about audience participation because she's not asking them to participate; she is asking them to recognize that they too are in need of salvation and should be willing to do what is necessary to achieve it. As opposed to the Christians' gift, she is not telling them that they have to accept her gift of love or be damned. She is asking them to recognize that the Indian is offering them a gift of love and that they be willing to desire her gift without the risk of punishment should they negate her offer. Negating her gift would not mean their death or enslavement, as rejecting her would leave them as still the inheritors of white privilege. To accept her gift, then, meant that they recognized the 500 years of repression that indigenous people have been endured up to our modern times. Willing to work towards rupturing that cycle of violence, they report to the stage to recognize her as an Indian and as the subject of damnation asking them to receive the gift. When they bite the woman's phallus, then, they willingly accept what she came to bring them. The act of intimacy between the white men and the brown woman is

the speech act of love as salvation that the Requerimiento could never perform.

Side by side, these two events constitute a mode of relationality in the present that is haunted by the invention of the Americas in both the colonial period and the 20th-century. In the event that took place in the terrain of colonialism in the colony, indigenous people were faced with the option of conversion under the threat of Christian love. In the event that took place in the terrain of coloniality in the postcolony, Bustamante's strap-on burrito was the embodiment of indigeneity that came to lovingly save the white men from centuries of colonial guilt. Evidently, in both the historical experience of 16th-century colonialism and the Chicana's experience of coloniality centuries later, racial difference was engaged as a body conditioned by speech acts. Indigenous people were first called forth to face death and/or salvation at the hands of whiteness, and their lives were again hailed as a strap-on burrito endowed with the erotic and healing powers necessary to bring about racial salvation for both them and us. This collusion between the terror of the 16th-century performative text and the cruelty of 20th-century Chicana performance in producing an indigenous ethos is exemplary of the relationship between spectacularity and the temporality of race.

The native subject hailed by the Requerimiento, made ready for either salvation or damnation, may not necessarily be easily recognized as a burrito strapped onto a brown woman's crotch in 1992. The satirical and over-the-top camp performance of *Indig/urrito*, however, cannot be easily dismissed in that Bustamante's ritual of purification is a rendition of the all too familiar primal moment of the invention of native peoples. In the priestess' performance of indigeneity, what we have at stake is first and foremost the possibility of a "conceptual complicity" with the "culture of conquest" that still clearly "haunts today's writing [and performance of] colonial discourses" (Rabasa 2000, 25). The Chicana's Indian phallus provokes a series of critical questions regarding the nature of her art. To what extent is this instance of Chicana performance rehearsing the technologies of colonial terror for the sake of audience consumption? What is the purpose of this ritual of purification being performed 500 years after Columbus first captured the Arawak man and put him on display? If the original law "organize[d] the world for colonization" (25) in the 16th-century, how are the speech act of love and the speech act of hate joining hands again to constitute the racial performativity of indigenous people in the 20th? Finally, what does love have to do with it? What does love have to do now with the salvation of racialized subjects who are the perpetrators of damnation from centuries before?

As a scholar writing about a performance in the terrain of coloniality, I argue that Bustamante's performance of cruelty did seek to deliberately reproduce a primal scene of subjection that took place in the colony. The burrito compels us, either as white men in the audience or as on-lookers of the naked brown female on stage strapping-on the embodiment of indigenous people, to relive the culture of colonial violence as a way of creating a possible history of the present. Most importantly, the burrito wants a future where this history of colonial terror is no longer the practice of everyday life. Unlike Artaud's colonizing tricks that left the Balinese dancers and the Tarahumara Indians stuck beyond the time of the West, the reparative potential of Chicana performance art lays in its cruel desire to "build another story, [to uncover] the untold to consciously remake the narrative" of Conquest we have inherited from a past we had no say in creating (Pérez 1999, 127). The point of the strap-on burrito is to explicitly order both audiences and theorists of coloniality to partake in an act that reproduces the violence of colonial interpellation and together move along terror to overcome it.

The live event itself created a mockery of colonial violence to bring about a different end to our tragic story. The phallus, in this case, is indeed endowed with healing powers when it is strapped onto the priestess who's

come to lovingly bring the white men the gift of salvation. In rehearsing the scenarios of discovery and terror cited in the archives, Bustamante turns the original objects of colonial erotics into the subjects of an erotics of conquest –the Arawaks that Columbus imprisoned and put on display, the Indians captured by the conquistadors, the indigenous women raped and made mothers of mestizos throughout the hemisphere. Her erotics of conquest turn the underside of the Spanish colonial project into a spectacular event, in all of its absurdity, when indigeneity is created from the observations of racialized bodies under the artist's critical gaze. As the representation of the modern indigenous people, the burrito strapped onto Bustamante's naked thighs very consciously makes a spectacle out of this particular experience. Rather than staging indigenous peoples' experience with colonial catastrophes, the experience of colonialism that the burrito is addressing is the "Enlightened" side of modernity –the conquerors' white masculinity. When Bustamante steps on stage she is at first unable to properly put on the harness, and not apologizing for her costume failure, she tells the audience that she is "not a ventriloquist and [she] is not a mime." It doesn't matter at all that she cannot properly adjust it, as long as the prop stays on to safely secure the burrito standing in for the dildo the harness is supposed to hold. Pure camp, the absence of the penis is rendered inconsequential and the

phallus trivialized: her access to both racial and male privilege is enabled by penile enhancement, an artifice of white men's privilege used to get them on their knees ready and willing to open their mouths for the embodiment of indigeneity.

Bustamante's absent penis is one she herself creates and for her own purposes; she says she made the burrito herself and without dairy or chile, "just to be considerate of the white folk." Being considerate of the white folk is an essential part of her ritual, as her good intentions –to not induce negative emotions or hurtful actions in her audiences– create her stage as the space where sociality can take place on a positive note. She is considerate of her audiences in making something that would taste good for them. Most importantly, she wants to give them a mode of living based on action.

> Ok, before we begin this holy sacred sacrament, I would you to state your name, anyway you want, and make a statement before absolving yourself. And, afterwards, I just want to encourage you to feel the healing rush that is going to surge through your body as you take the guilt for all those people who were too much of coward to come up on stage for you. Cause everyone is channeling all their shit right into your body right now, you know that, right? It's ok, relax. And then what I'd like you all to do in order to participate, because we all know for everyone to participate in order for a ritual to actually work, is when his teeth actually bite down on the burrito… I'd like each of you to say 'A Man," not "Amen," but "A Man" and think of somebody who you believe needs to be absolved for 500 years of guilt and repression so we can just move on.

Her performance designed to meet the funding requirements for artists of color is a racial fiasco. The event was staged to save white men from centuries of guilt of being white and male, but with the body of the performer, the performance staged salvation as only possible through a brown woman with a phallic vagina. On the one hand, salvation from violent racial relations comes at the expense of rendering themselves the receptacle of the body invented as "race" centuries ago: the Indian (literally) melts inside them. To absolve themselves on stage and in the name of the audiences who were too much of a coward to come up on stage for them, these men must inherently give up their gender, sexual and racial privileges and succumb to the brown priestess coming into them orally. At the same time, their consumption of the phallic Indian is not the reiteration of the consumption of racialized bodies put on display for observation and voyeuristic fantasies. Their eating of the burrito is a conscious consumption, and they know that what they are eating is rubbing their white guilt on their faces as a way of moving beyond the past. Salvation comes through the mouths of the white men being entered by the performer, and through the artist's mouth moaning from the pleasure she gets in cleansing them through this holy scared sacrament. On the other hand, Bustamante cannot escape her own subjectivity: she enters the stage wearing two minimal pieces of

clothing and bends over, her backside to the audience, and proclaims "that might have been the highlight of the [event]." She too enjoys being watched and putting her nude brown body on display for everyone there to see. She enjoys her self sexually by putting on the burrito and feeling the phallic object inside the men: "You know I have to say that there's almost nothing that makes me happier than people kneeling waiting to bite the burrito," she tell us. The moans from each time her strap-on enters seven white male bodies are a display of sexual pleasure felt at being able to hail these men in need of forgiveness from the indigeneity that she is embodying. It is she who wants to penetrate them and rid them of the guilt they inherited from the first man who stepped on our lands; it is she who wants to top them on their knees.

The simulation of oral sex is founded on sexual desire as much as it is about reformatting sociality for racialized subjects. Bustamante's moans, grunts, smiles, and feelings of sympathy for the men who kneel with their mouths open suggest that her sex is the only one benefiting from oral sex. The act of penetration, however, involved both the woman penetrating and the men being penetrated orally, and penetration is only possible because they have recognized that she is not their subordinate, or she theirs. The repeated acts of intimacy require that all parties involved recognize that they

each are partaking in the ritual as equals. Commonality, not singularity, frames their most intimate of social relations. Also, she penetrates their bodies, topping them as they kneel before her, but their bottoming consists of biting and eating what is essentially a part of her. Topping white men gives her pleasure in her sex as they accept the gift of the burrito, bottoming gives them salvation when they receive the burrito in their mouths, and nobody leaves the ritual still living in unequal relations of power. She is an artist playing an Indian who puts her body in a very vulnerable position: come and eat my brown female body, eating me will finally bring you and I peace. *Indig/urrito*'s relational field was one of love: our experiences of conquest involve you and I both, you taking all of me in, and my sharing my history of damnation with you. Sexual intimacy takes place in the world of the stage where race, in both sociality and embodiment, is done side-to-side and not just top and bottom. The spectacular event, in its organization of the social alongside horizontal rather than hierarchical lines of power, was the Indian's gift of salvation from conquest.

For José Esteban Muñoz, the social nature of affect means that feelings are not particular because they arise out of the encounters between self and other, and are thus part of "a larger collective mapping" (Muñoz 2006b, 679). He argues that the feelings of people of color are brown

feelings, "[the] manifestations of the ways in which ethnic modes of comportment not only represent anti-normative affect, but also challenge the ways in which dominant ideology prescribes certain modes of normative comportment" (Muñoz 2006a, 193). He also argues that since the social can be mapped through affect, we must begin "[deciphering] what work race does in the world" if we are to change the mapping of the social world beyond normative affect (Muñoz 2006b, 678). Unlike the decolonial claims to language and epistemology as the constitution of race, Muñoz's work situates racial formations along the lines of affect and performance. He theorizes brown feelings as "a doing within the social that surpasses limitations of epistemological renderings of race," a performance of affect that can make possible new structures of sociality by being attuned to the ways in which the feelings of racialized subjects relate to one another in difference (687). Essentially, Muñoz is proposing "Brownness" as a project of ethics, "one that attempts to incorporate understandings of the psychic in the service of understanding the social" by displacing an "attentiveness of the self to others [and] to see the other in alterity as existing in a relational field to the self" (681). Brownness is the potential of brown feelings to radically alter the social and transgress the negative psychic attachments of race.

Building from the Brownness of brown feelings, Muñoz has analyzed Bustamante's performances as the places where the artist's body becomes the vehicle through which centuries of racial oppression are worked out. As he suggests, in remapping the "antagonistic feelings, negative affect, and ugly feelings" of race, Bustamante's brown feelings are "not simply cleaned but viewed as constitutive of subjectivity. [Her] performance and the feelings it generates, despite its ephemeral nature, do not disappear" (Muñoz 2000a, 200). In *Indig/urrito*'s case, he says that the performance was an affective scenario where people were conditioned by the "negative affect that haunts racial and sexual relations" (196). "Bad feelings can simply be bitten away" by the men on stage eating the artist's purifying insides, "absolving their own burden of guilt" through her body (196). The performance was also staging "another fantasy of reparation" where the artist made "her bad feelings available, prone and vulnerable" as well (196). The artists uses her body as a kind of "reparative endeavor" whereby her "performance practice engages and re-imagines what has been a history of violence, degradation, and compulsory performance" seeking to bring about an-other way of being in a world where racial subjection is not the order of the day (193-194).

As the embodiment of indigeneity, Bustamante insists on loving the body ravaged by centuries of colonialism, and she performs a brownness

that was born in a moment 500 years before. If for Muñoz the ethical imperative of brownness makes possible an "extraction of self from the affective burden of ugly feelings" (Muñoz 2006a, 200), then *Indig/urrito*'s Brownness lies in the artist's desire to remake the relational field of race beyond the ugly feelings of colonialism. The artist's racial performativity is "a political doing" and "the recognition of racial belonging, coherence, and divergence in the world" (Muñoz 2006b, 678). Bustamante removes herself from the oppression of the colony by offering her body as consumption. Her audiences, in return, remove themselves from a place of privilege to a space of alterity-in-difference. For everyone watching off stage, she encourages them all to step beyond the burden of colonial guilt, stop projecting their negative feelings onto those brave enough to face the consequences of colonialism, and participate in the ritual by uttering the words "A man" each time a white man is saved. The utterance is a transgression of the sanctity of the Christian "Amen," reminding us that the one who first offered salvation to the New World was indeed just one man made of everyday human materiality and not divine essence. The audiences who did not heed her call and rejected her gift refused "to be absolved for 500 years of guilt and repression so we can just move on," but even though they rejected the offer, their repeated soundings of "A man" partook in the

ritual and made it work. The participation of the audiences who did not come up on stage was induced through affective interpellation: they didn't accept the gift of salvation that she asked them to receive, so she tells them to participate and make the ritual work because they were still feeling racially guilty. White guilt made the men onstage feel the desire to be absolved, and it made the rest of the audiences stay in their seats feeling guilty of being white. Both scenarios had the same result: everyone's emotions were mobilized for the political purpose of calling the artist and her audiences into racialized subjectivities.

Muñoz' analysis focus solely on Bustamante and the men on her stage, but the audience members not compelled to move from their seats were equally interpellated through negative feelings as much as those who did report to the artist. They too are vulnerable in being exposed as feeling racially guilty. Bustamante's purpose of creating a relationality based on equality succeeded when audience members chose to participate out of guilt, either by accepting salvation or refusing to be absolved. Everyone who played a part in the ritual recognized that racial difference existed in 1992 as a legacy of colonialism, and they allowed the ritual to engage race as an affective construct between self and other. Bustamante was able incite a movement through the affective attachments of race: the ritual helped

everyone there move on from a time where doing race repeats the violence of colonial interpellation, and into a time when those involved can make racial difference not a thing of damnation. If postcolonialism is anachronistic at best, never having quite outlived colonialism's (supposed) past, nor able to relive the days before the white man arrived, the live performance of indigeneity also propelled itself towards a future not entrenched in the ciclicity of tragic time. The scenes of *Indig/urrito* create a social world where the recognition of the self in difference from the other does not make it impossible to recognize ourselves in them. Overcoming the burden of guilt by accepting the Indian's gift of love is an act of reparation for the white men on stage and the seated audiences refusing to go up. It is also a reparative act for the artist because her ritual worked in making everyone's sense of relationality anew. The performance was an act of love reworking the relational field of alterity for the sake of belonging in the world.

Rabasa's (2000) ideas on the "cultures of conquest" seem most pertinent here. He refers to the term as the structures of feeling invested in understanding how the world is organized for colonization, and he asks scholars of colonialism and postcolonialism to not be complicit with conquest by projecting ideologies insufficiently critical of the history of colonialism onto colonial texts when we study the writing of violence. My

own ideas expressed throughout *Impossible Indians*, and this chapter in particular, partake in a culture of conquest when I study a theatre and performance art that directly compels both audiences and theorists of coloniality to partake in an act reproducing the violence of colonial interpellation in order to move past terror. As a decolonial performance of cruelty –colonial terror in itself–, the Chicana art piece sought to reproduce a primal act of subjection in the terrain of colonialism and re-do the Requerimiento. The simulacrum of that scene of violence hailed racialized beings, in all their colonial glory, to engage those moments where indigenous people were reduced to corporeality without rationality. The Indian on stage is at first reduced to a prop representing the modernity/coloniality of indigeneity, but when the prop is made part of a living being, the audience directly engaged with the embodiment of racial particularity, not an empty signifier. The audiences willingly engaged with Bustamante in thinking of the past of colonialism in the present, but their making of race as an affective construct unbound it from colonialism's trenches.

My study of Bustamante's performance of the present seeks to comprehend the nuances of an art form that is asking us to be complicit with the colonial project. *Indig/urrito* compels us to create a decolonial future where this history of colonial terror is no longer the practice of everyday life.

I am not moving towards a post-racial argument, nor am I suggesting that Bustamante's spectacular performance of indigeneity is essentially theorizing a time where race no longer exists as a result of her ritual. Rather, I do think that the brown priestess brings us racial peace after centuries of colonial terror, because she wants to imagine a time for decoloniality. The decolonial imaginary can only exist when a future is marked by the coming of that which is *not* left unsaid or unthought in the present. She is asking us to say, to think, and to *do* that which has not been said, thought, or done *yet*. The political potential of not doing race through a colonizing ideology produces a future where it will be possible to continue living through the past in the present so that the we no longer rehearse the tragedies of conquest.

In *The Decolonial Imaginary*, Emma Pérez writes that "[the] history of Chicanas, a feminist history, has been written inside a decolonial time lag, with a third space feminist critique, between what has been, what is, and what many of us hope will be. All at once we live the past, present, and future. History itself has encoded upon it a tool for a liberatory consciousness…. If we choose to enact the tool of history and call it third space feminist consciousness, […] then we begin to build another story, uncovering the untold to consciously remake the narrative" (1999, 127). Alicia Arrizón), theorizes the decolonial imaginary along similar lines in

Queering Mestizaje: Transculturation and Performance (2006), where she defines the term "as a method of reading that symbolically attempts to resist and contest certain systems of domination" (5). That is the brand of decoloniality that I suggest Bustamante is asking us to perform when the tragedy of Conquest is reproduced with a relationality of love in mind. A performance like *Indig/urrito* echoes decolonial strategies of reading in that it resists the urge to continue thinking indigenous people in terms of an unsurpassable tragedy, and it contests this tragic temporality by giving us a way out. With sheer joy and pleasure, she suggests that salvation from tragedy comes to us from the inside of the burrito: the white men want the fillings inside a brown woman's strap-on burrito, and so the riddance of guilt comes from white masculinity bottoming for the signifier of indigenous subjectivity. The ideology of her spectacular indigeneity is a "decolonial imaginary [that] is enacted as hope, as love, transcending all that has come before" (Pérez 1999, 126). The purpose of the spectacle, I argue, was about liberating both them and us of negative feelings so we can just move on beyond a life in damnation. The brown priestess tells us that we can only perform our salvation in a future that is critically conscious of our common history of colonial terror, not when we create art unable to change the meaning of race through our rehearsals of the damned.

Opening Night: Doing Race, Otherwise

The making of coloniality/modernity begins with the archives, in the citations of racial exhibitions and speech acts hailing brown bodies to submit to a self-entitled European master coming to enslave them in the name of Christ. Columbus' exhibition of a body of the Indian was one of the first moments in history where the social world was structured around the reduction of physical life to a question of rationality. Even if the term "race" did not circulate then as we think of the term today, the ordering of the world through an embodiment of difference –rational/human inferiority could literally be seen on the Arawak's body– was to be the order of colonialism after 1492. Colonialism, in turn, was an issue of racial difference as much as it was about the economic and territorial expansion of medieval Europe into the time of the Renaissance. Columbus' thinking of the Arawak a thing to be captured reduced human life to life not at all. The conqueror's exhibition of racial difference was the first act of damnation that made the world anew. Most importantly, for the sake of our present, the post-1492 world order still haunts artistic practices wrestling with the archives of today.

The Tempest is a rehearsal of that first moment of conquest in that Shakespeare brought the invention of the Americas to the Renaissance stage,

complete with an island that European men did not know existed prior to Prospero's discovery, and the native enslaved in the name of Christian reason. The original citation of Caliban's monstrosity partakes in the very real tragedy that Usigli tells us Shakespeare could never understand, as Prospero's scale of humanity concludes his play by leaving the native forever damned to be the master's slave. Césaire takes direct aim at Shakespeare's limited imagination of tragedy when he rewrites the 17th-century play with an anticolonial project in mind. *A Tempest* takes place where the original manuscript could not go and his slave wants the freedom to destroy the world of masters and slaves, even at the expense of his own life. The slave's decolonization never materializes because he is unable to kill his master when he is given the chance. His feelings of remorse at taking a life makes him more human than Prospero, because he reclaims the humanity denied to him by not killing the one who claims to dictate the meanings of the "human." Caliban's is a subaltern ontology, a homunculus that recognizes himself in the other and chooses not to end a life. The recognition of humanity-in-difference, however, fails in both the archive (Shakespeare) and its repertoire (Césaire) when the anticolonial slave ends his days frozen in a timeless damnation.

The making of decoloniality begins with an artistic practice theorizing the relational field of race based on love and alterity, and from a supposedly tragic Indian that desires to dwell in an elsewhere altogether different from the archive's historical records of damnation. Damnation and unfreedom are the legacies inherited by Migdalia Cruz and Nao Bustamante when their works of art organize the world around an axis of race. Citrona and the phallic brown woman, however, are different rehearsals of the damned. The difference between the projects of colonialism, anticolonialism and the Latina rehearsals hinges on the possibility of a different future for racialized subjects. The cannibalism of Cruz's play surpasses Shakespeare's inability to think the slave capable of being both human and free, as well as Césaire's incomplete project of decolonization. Citrona outweighs Caliban's ontological potential by destroying her masters and setting herself free of colonial relations. Freedom now in place, she is to spend the rest of her days in utter darkness; even in freedom's future, damnation is still in place. In Bustamante's *Indig/urrito*, the *damné* rehearses the scenes of her subjection that have been repeated for centuries and asks native and non-native alike to be complicit in not leaving tragedy in tact. For the damned, displacing damnation as their modus operandi takes place in a simulation of oral sex between white men bottoming for an Indian woman, as well as audiences

heeding the call to participate in their seats and recognize the sanctity of the ritual taking place. Thus, when their ritual of communal recognition worked and race was purified of its ugly feelings deriving from conquest, they opened the relational field to love, hope and freedom. The Indian's spectacular performance of race through love is what can bring us out of tragedy and to create the future world where colonialism is not the order of the day. Fiercely utopist, this decolonial future is what I am calling the decolonial gift offered to us by the Latina artist.

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